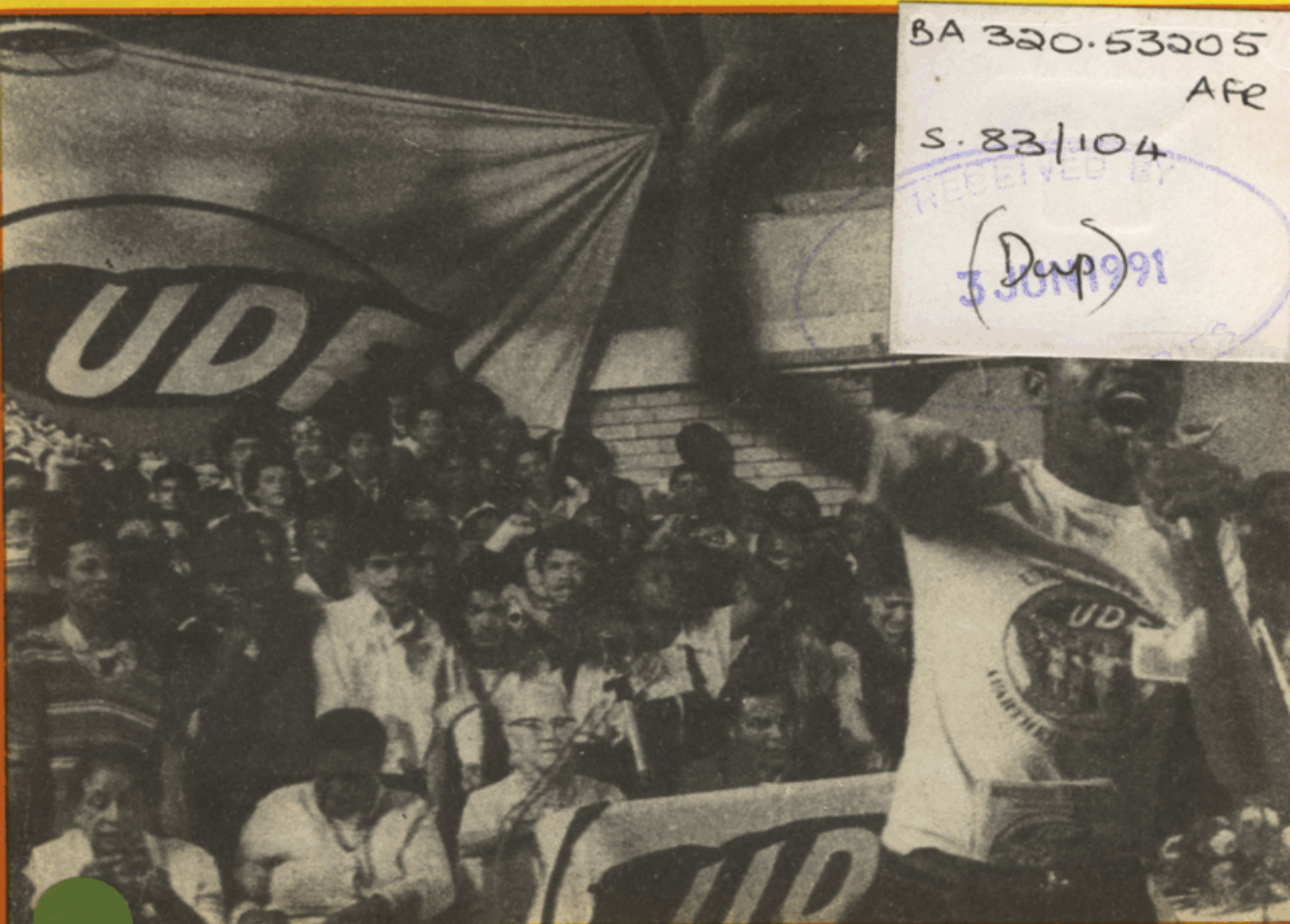


# The African Communist

NO 97 SECOND QUARTER 1984

## *UNITED FRONT* TO END APARTHEID



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## EDITORIAL NOTES

# **BOTHA AND REAGAN PLOT AGAINST AFRICA**

The violence and destabilisation which are escalating throughout Southern Africa flow directly from the Botha regime's policy of depriving the majority of the peoples of South Africa and Namibia of their right to national independence and democracy. The new constitution passed by South Africa's all-white Parliament last year and endorsed by the all-white referendum of November 2, 1983, totally excludes the African majority from participation in any of the legislative or executive bodies of the country. Botha has presented this new constitution to the world as a "reform", but because it in essence denies equality of rights and opportunities not only to Africans but also to the Coloureds and Indians who are offered only second-grade status in their segregated parliaments, it can do nothing to eliminate race and class conflict and bring peace to our strife-torn country. On



the contrary. The new constitution is merely an extension of the policy of 'divide and rule' by which the racists have succeeded in maintaining their domination for over three centuries. The deprivation and oppression of the black majority (Africans, Coloureds and Indians) continues, and will continue to evoke opposition and resistance from all sections of the population, including democratic whites, until final liberation is achieved.

Likewise on Namibia South Africa continues with its policy of diktat. Its occupation of Namibia has been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice, yet it refuses to implement the resolutions of the United Nations with whom it has been in contention ever since the end of World War 2.

South Africa justifies its stance by claiming that it is being subjected to a "total onslaught" by the forces of international Communism. But it is not Russians and Cubans who are attacking the bastions of racism and imperialism in Southern Africa but the oppressed peoples of the area themselves, under the leadership of the ANC and SWAPO. No Russians or Cubans have been brought before any South African court charged with 'treason', 'terrorism', 'sabotage' or 'subversion' — only South Africans — Africans, Indians, Coloureds and Whites — fighting for freedom in the land of their birth. This is not to deny the support that the socialist countries and many others have given to the liberation movement, or the crucial part they play in the world-wide struggle against imperialism. But for Botha to suggest that South Africa is threatened with invasion by foreign forces is rubbish. No Russians, Cubans, Angolans, Zimbabweans, Mozambicans, Batswana, Swazis, Zambians, Tanzanians or Basotho have ever crossed South Africa's borders with weapons in their hands aiming to destroy the South African regime. Yet South Africa has sent its forces into every neighbouring country and has armed, trained and directed bandit gangs aimed at destabilising and overthrowing the governments of the frontline states.

South Africa's justification in the past for its invasions of Angolan territory has been that it was engaged in 'hot pursuit' of SWAPO forces allegedly fleeing from Namibia. Last December's invasion, however, was ostensibly to pre-empt the 'annual' SWAPO infiltration from Angola by up to 1,000 members of PLAN, SWAPO's military wing, and General Constand Viljoen, the South African chief of staff, boasted that his forces had succeeded in destroying SWAPO's headquarters and the missile batteries protecting it. Viljoen also claimed to have knocked out 25 "Russian" tanks and to have captured enormous amounts of 'Russian' arms and ammunition. Having achieved their objective, the South African forces were now prepared to withdraw, he said.

The truth is something quite different. In a communication to the United Nations Secretary General dated December 31, Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos said South Africa had launched a full-scale invasion of his country with three motorised infantry brigades, four 140mm and 155mm artillery units, two battalions of paratroopers, 100 planes and helicopters, AML-90s, AML-60s and MX tanks. On January 1, 1984, Angola's Ministry of Defence commented:

"The illegal presence on Angolan territory of large quantities of (South African) war material and men has different objectives to those proclaimed by Pretoria. The truth of the matter is that the undeclared war inflicted on us is aimed not only at making it difficult to consolidate the revolutionary process under way, but at preventing the Angolan people from winning their complete independence, because their example would contaminate other states in the region, which might complicate the plans of international capital, Pretoria and its proteges to win back what they lost with the proclamation of the People's Republic of Angola on 11 November 1975".

SWAPO in a communique said it was impossible for the South Africans to have destroyed its headquarters because it had never existed. PLAN operated from within Namibia itself. In the area attacked by the South Africans "there was neither a single Namibian nor any SWAPO anti-aircraft batteries as claimed by Constand Viljoen". As President dos Santos pointed out, the victims of South Africa's aerial bombardment were civilians in a number of towns in southern Angola, especially Cuvelai, Mulondo, Cahama, Kassinga and Caiundo, more than 200 kilometres from the Namibian border. On January 2 the Angolan Defence Department said "the South African invaders have dropped bombs containing toxic substances on our troops and on the civilian population" — a charge which has also been levelled against South African-backed bandit forces operating in Mozambique.

World opinion, with the exception of the imperialists, was outraged by South Africa's infamous conduct. On January 6 the United Nations Security Council strongly condemned South Africa for its military strikes in Angola and demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of South African forces from Angolan territory. The resolution was passed by 12 votes to none — but with two abstentions, the United States and Britain. The Soviet news agency TASS had pointed out in a commentary on January 5 that South Africa "would have been unable to act so arrogantly and impudently if it had not felt the support and encouragement of Washington", and here at the Security Council was the proof that TASS was right. To ram



the point home and make South Africa understand that it would not be allowed to get away with it, the Soviet Union warned South Africa that its occupation of Angolan territory and support for the UNITA bandit gangs was unacceptable. The Botha regime should bear in mind that the USSR was committed to Angola by a treaty of friendship and co-operation and would give the Angolan Government all the support needed to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Under the influence of the Security Council rebuff, the Soviet warning, and the courageous defence of FAPLA which inflicted on the South Africans their greatest number of casualties in a single operation since hostilities commenced several years ago, South Africa eventually announced that its forces were being withdrawn. But this, too, was a lie. There was still a massive South African presence in southern Angola, and South Africa continued to provoke conflict inside Angola to cover up its refusal to grant independence to Namibia.

### **Round of Talks**

There followed a period of intense diplomatic activity, in which South Africa was engaged in face to face negotiations with representatives of the Angolan government. In the same period South African and Mozambique government delegations met in talks on trade, tourism and 'security', while in Harare Premier Mugabe stated that Zimbabwe had had discussions on 'security' matters with South Africa. The US Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Dr Chester Crocker, and other US officials were also involved in these negotiations.

The first outcome of all this was the announcement by Premier Botha in the South African Parliament at the end of January that, having received certain assurances from the United States, South Africa was beginning the withdrawal of its remaining forces from Angola and that this could lay the basis for a settlement in the region provided that none of the parties concerned attempted to "exploit the resulting situation".

The nature of the assurances South Africa had received from the United States was not clear; nor is it clear whence the United States derives its authority to poke its nose into the affairs of the region altogether and give assurances about anything. What is clear, however, is that the United States and South Africa, relying on the use or threat of force, are attempting to impose on Southern Africa a settlement which will promote their interests at the expense of those of the liberation movements and the independent African countries. It is noteworthy that the stooge internal parties of Namibia

were involved in the January negotiations but SWAPO was not. Furthermore neither Botha nor any of the stooges made any mention of their intention to implement UN Security Resolution 435 laying down the rules for the achievement of genuine independence for Namibia. On the contrary, the so-called Multi-Party Conference of stooge leaders told a Windhoek press conference, after their discussions with Botha and Crocker in Cape Town, that they planned to draw up a constitutional framework for independence and were considering the formation of an interim government for Namibia. "There were strong signs yesterday that full South African promotional support was building up behind the MPC", reported the *Star* on February 1st. This way lies a repeat of the disastrous DTA experiment, ending in renewed conflict.

Whatever temporary balance may be struck between the contending forces in Southern Africa based on present realities of power, it should be clear that no lasting settlement can be achieved without the full involvement and co-operation of the ANC and SWAPO. The rhetoric of Botha and Crocker about the need for "peace and security" should not be allowed to obscure the long-term objectives of the parties involved.

The United States wants to ensure that Southern Africa and its natural, human and strategic resources are securely locked within the orbit of imperialism, and is using South Africa as a sub-agent for this purpose, just as it uses Israel in the Middle East. For its part, South Africa's involvement in Angola is aimed at more than the retention of control over Namibia, or even the reconquest of Angola. It was the former Premier Vorster who said, shortly after his accession to office in 1966:

"In many respects we have, with respect to much of Africa south of the Sahara, a responsibility which the United States has undertaken on a much larger scale with respect to the underdeveloped areas of the world as a whole".

And two years later he added the threat that "nothing is going to prevent us from becoming the leaders of Africa in every field".

This thinking — that it is South Africa's destiny to save Africa for the West — still underlies the Botha regime's foreign policy today, and ties in neatly with the aggressive policies of the Reagan administration. The US discharge of its "responsibility towards the underdeveloped areas of the world," as demonstrated by its invasion of Grenada, its support for fascist regimes and forces in Latin America, Africa and Asia, its presence and murderous sea and air bombardments in Lebanon — all this has the emphatic approval of the Botha regime, which attempts to discharge its "responsibilities towards Africa" in the American way. South Africa's approach to Africa, at home or



abroad, is that of the bully and the blusterer — arrogant, domineering, racist and imperialist, determined to impose its solutions by force, irrespective of the wellbeing or wishes of the majority. The interests of the haves must be made to prevail over those of the have-nots, for the greater glory of white supremacy, the free enterprise system and international capital. Above all, South Africa needs a Western-dominated Africa to guarantee the survival of apartheid.

No matter how often Reagan and Thatcher proclaim their ‘abhorrence’ of apartheid, it is crystal clear today that South African strategies at home and abroad are co-ordinated with those of the west. Reagan’s phrase ‘constructive engagement’ is a synonym for collaboration with apartheid in every vital sphere. The South African forces are equipped with western material and know-how. Reagan approves Botha’s new constitution. South African and western intelligence services share their secrets. South Africa’s military strategy is a carbon copy of that of Israel in the Middle East, and both serve western interests as well as their own.

Once again it is demonstrated that the fight against apartheid and the fight against imperialism and neo-colonialism are inextricably linked. For the achievement of our objectives — the liberation of the oppressed peoples of South Africa, the independence of Namibia, the ending of South African aggression against the frontline states — we must join hands with the people of Angola, Grenada, Nicaragua, Lebanon and other countries fighting against the same enemy. We must become true internationalists, proletarian internationalists, and understand that the fight for national liberation and the fight for international liberation are one and the same fight. In this fight we have many allies and know we can rely on the support and strength of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. National and class struggle are products of the same system, capitalism, and will be ended when that system is replaced world-wide.

---

## **HOW TO DISCOVER THE TRUTH BEHIND THE NEWS**

We in South Africa are painfully aware of the extent to which our knowledge of the world is determined, and distorted, by the tiny handful of monopolists who own and control the media. Radio and television are state controlled, and the press is almost 100 per cent in the hands of white big business. In a country divided on race lines, there is not a single daily newspaper owned and controlled by any section of the black population, which has only a handful of communal and community weekly and occasional publications through which to express itself. As if this were not enough by way of restriction on the freedom of the press, the regime has buttressed itself with a mass of security laws which hinder the flow of information and opinion and prevent any effective challenge to racist domination being voiced legally and publicly. The views of the African National Congress and the South African Communist Party, speaking in the name of the majority of the oppressed working people of our country, can only be disseminated by illegal means.

If South Africa demonstrates the insidious effects of minority domination of the media in its most extreme and objectionable form, it is by no means alone in the world in this respect. An investigation conducted by the McBride Commission at the request of the overwhelming majority of the 150 member countries of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has revealed that a few dozen trans-national corporations, mostly US-owned, control about 80 per cent of the newspapers in the capitalist and developing countries, 90 per cent of the international radio stations and 95 per cent of the TV stations. The big western news agencies like United Press International, Associated Press, Reuters etc. control the gathering, circulation and transmission of 90% of the news and information about the capitalist and developing countries, and largely shape the western world's perception of the socialist countries. The United States 'information' industry is the country's second largest in the export table, bringing in 75,000 million dollars in 1980.

All these media, while proclaiming their impartiality and devotion to press freedom, inevitably mirror the viewpoint of the big business interests which control them and the class which they serve — and that is not the working class. The overwhelming majority of the western media make little secret of their bias against the working class and their hatred of Communism, the Soviet Union and the other socialist countries. They are contemptuous or dismissive of the developing countries, concentrating on sensation at the expense of rational discussion of their problems.



A most dangerous situation can develop if the selection and circulation of news world-wide continue to remain in the hands of cold warriors. We had a chilling demonstration of this after the shooting down of the Korean spy plane last year — an incident so grossly distorted by the western media that in the ensuing climate of anti-Soviet hysteria Reagan was able to instal his Pershing and Cruise missiles in Europe and so wreck the US-Soviet arms limitation talks.

### **Canadian Survey**

Further evidence of media bias against the Soviet Union was provided in a survey of the Canadian press published last year by *Sources*, a commentary magazine on the Canadian news media. The magazine surveyed the treatment of the Soviet Union in three leading Toronto newspapers from November 1, 1982, to March 31, 1983 and came to the conclusion that —

“The view of the Soviet Union that prevails today in large portions of our journalistic establishment (is) so extreme, so subjective, so far removed from what any sober scrutiny of external reality would reveal, that it is not only ineffective but dangerous as a guide to political action”.

The survey found that of 147 opinion columns published over the period only four could be considered favourable or friendly to the Soviet Union. Not one of the 43 editorials had anything positive to say about the country, its policies or people. Not one item published by the three papers consisted of a complete unedited text or statement from a Soviet source, and only three items quoted a Soviet source without comment. An incredible 126 stories dealt with Soviet spies, “real or imagined ... as many as dealt with Soviet art, artists, culture, sports, daily living, foreign policy, media, science and travel combined.”

This depressing survey led the magazine to the conclusion that:-

“Instead of anything approaching an informative, rounded, realistic picture of a country the papers themselves claim is so important, the public is being mistreated to a hodgepodge of distorting trivia, boring stereotypes and transparent bias parading as news”.

Hardly a basis for international understanding and detente. Nor is the Canadian press any different from that of the other capitalist countries, where anti-communism and anti-Sovietism are regarded as essential components of journalistic equipment.

Every effort must be made to counter this senseless and dangerous flood of anti-Soviet propaganda, which conditions people for war. As Yuri Andropov said in an address to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union on June 15, 1983:

"A struggle is in progress for the minds and hearts of billions of people in the world. And the future of mankind depends to no small degree on the outcome of this ideological struggle. Hence it is clear how exceptionally important it is to be able to bring to the broadest masses of the people throughout the world the truth about socialist society: about its advantages, about its peaceful policy in a comprehensible and convincing form. It is no less important to skillfully expose lying subversive imperialist propaganda. What we need is a well-considered single system of counter-propaganda, a dynamic and effective one".

It is not only the socialist countries that suffer from the news discrimination and distortions of the capitalist press and news agencies. The developing countries are equally dissatisfied with the coverage they get from the western dominated media, and UNESCO and the Movement of the Non-Aligned Countries have been grappling with the problem for many years. The states that founded UNESCO in 1946 wrote into the first sentence of its constitution:

"That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Such sentiments are obviously unattractive today in the minds of the warmongers of the White House and the Pentagon. Towards the end of 1983 the United States announced its intention of withdrawing from UNESCO on the grounds that it was devoting too much attention to "political issues beyond its competence". In terms of UNESCO's constitution, the US had to give a year's notice, so its withdrawal will take effect at the end of this year unless the decision is reversed.

### **The Wrong Politics**

Why is the US angry with UNESCO? Certainly not because it has at times taken a political stance, but because it has taken what in US eyes is the *wrong* political stance. For example, UNESCO has condemned both Israel and South Africa for pursuing policies of racial discrimination, particularly in the spheres of education and culture. But more importantly, the US is angry because UNESCO is promoting the development of a New World Information and Communications Order with the specific aim of ending the dominance of the imperialist countries in the field of international information. The 38th United Nations General Assembly had proclaimed 1983 World Communications Year, and the activities of UNESCO during the year highlighted the extent to which the gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries was widening with the introduction of new technologies based on electronic and satellite communication which are almost exclusively controlled by the big transnational corporations.

Most countries in the world have neither the money nor the infrastructure to make use of these new technologies.

In pursuance of the General Assembly directives, UNESCO has been analysing various methods of strengthening the ability of the developing countries to hold their own in the sphere of information and communication, and has called on governments to play their part in building the New World Information and Communications Order. One strategy pursued by UNESCO has been to encourage the development of continental and regional news agencies which could provide an alternative to the dominance of the western agencies. Last July, for example, information ministers of the six frontline states in Southern Africa — Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Zambia, Angola, Botswana and Tanzania — together with representatives of the ANC and SWAPO, as well as the information minister of Nigeria, met at Kadoma, in Zimbabwe, and after a two-day discussion issued a declaration protesting against the use of South Africa by international news agencies and other media as the main information centre for the region. The declaration said:

“This has resulted in a distorted view of our region, and tends to give credence to Pretoria’s biased view of reality in Southern Africa”.

The conference appealed to foreign news media to set up bureaux in independent African states and announced that in future no foreign correspondents would be allowed to cover their countries from bases in South Africa. The conference also complained of the propaganda and information aggression to which the frontline states were subjected by the South African media, usually accompanied by aggression in the political and military fields as well.

The evil consequences of South Africa’s domination of the flow of information from Southern Africa have been demonstrated by world coverage of South Africa’s invasion of Angola. Almost without exception the western media have given extensive coverage to the claims of South African military chiefs whilst the communiqués issued by the Angolans have been played down or ignored.

Last year, with the backing of UNESCO and the Organisation of African Unity, Africa took steps to counter the western news stranglehold. A Pan-African News Agency was established with headquarters at Dakar. A PANA regional office was established in Lusaka and is being regularly supplied with information and news items by the African National Congress.

These measures of self-defence taken by the developing countries to protect their interests in the sphere of information are condemned by the



United States as “political” and an “interference with the free flow of information”, opening the way for “state control of the media” etc. The likelihood is, however, that it is fear for the profits of the transnational corporations that has induced the United States to withdraw from UNESCO. For our part we can only applaud all measures taken by the developing countries to protect themselves from informational and cultural aggression by the imperialists. And we note that at the end of January, 1984, the Soviet Union replied to the US notice of withdrawal by reaffirming its full support for UNESCO’s attempts to establish a New World Information and Communications Order. The US no doubt thought that it only had to flourish its cheque book to cow UNESCO into submission. UNESCO’s firm stand, backed by the developing and socialist countries, makes it clear that in the long run it will be the US itself that suffers from its boycott.

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## **FIDEL CASTRO ON GRENADA**

The United States invasion of tiny Grenada last October was one of those cataclysmic events which exposes in a flash the true nature and intentions of world imperialism. The Reagan administration regarded the social measures of the New Jewel Movement to promote the development of a population of just over 100,000 people as a dire threat to the security of the United States itself—population 220 million, and generally considered to be the most powerful capitalist country on earth.

If Reagan’s fears were justified, there is only one thing to be said — it is a sad commentary on the stability of the United States, not Grenada.

Nevertheless, it is now clear that the US had been plotting the overthrow of the Grenada government and the ending of the New Jewel experiment in social change ever since Maurice Bishop came to power. The US preferred the administration of Gairy and his Mongoose Gang, with all the murders and oppression to their credit, to any possibility of socialism.

Reagan denied his occupation of Grenada was an invasion, preferring to call it a “rescue mission”. Let us accept his terminology. The US invasion was aimed to rescue Grenada for capitalism, whether the Grenadan people wished it or not. The interests of the US had to prevail.

We print in this issue of *The African Communist* the full text of a speech delivered by Fidel Castro, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, at the eulogy for the heroes killed in Grenada held in Havana on November 14. We do so because Castro's speech is not only the most detailed analysis we have seen of the events which occurred in Grenada, but is also one of the most moving and impressive social documents of our time, placing Grenada in the context of the world-wide struggle to advance from capitalism towards a new social order based on social ownership of the means of production and distribution, with human need, and not greed, at the focus of human endeavour.

Castro's wise and compassionate words contain lessons for us all. His defiant call to battle for a better world must be answered.

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### **DEATH OF YURI ANDROPOV**

The labours for peace and socialism of Yuri Andropov, general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Central Committee and President of the USSR Supreme Soviet Presidium, were tragically curtailed by his death on February 9.

Heartfelt condolences on behalf of all members of the South African Communist Party were expressed in a message from the Central Committee of the SACP to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people conveyed to Moscow by Moses Mabhida, general secretary of the SACP, who attended comrade Andropov's funeral on February 14.

## **“WE WILL PRESERVE AND STRENGTHEN PEACE”**



A commitment to the policy of peaceful coexistence was stressed by **KONSTANTIN CHERNENKO** in his speech accepting election to the post of general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in succession to the late Yuri Andropov last February.



# **UNITED FRONT TO END APARTHEID**

## **THE ROAD TO MASS ACTION IN SOUTH AFRICA**

**By L. Mzansi**

The annual address for 1984 of the President of the African National Congress, Comrade O. R. Tambo, a document rich in theoretical and practical insights, points out that the revolutionary ferment in our country has “plunged the ruling racist clique into deeper and deeper levels of crisis.” The document goes on to explain that recent manoeuvres on the constitutional front by the Nationalist Party are an implicit recognition of the insolubility of the crisis.<sup>1</sup> The racist regime is involved in “crisis management”, a desperate attempt to see that things do not get entirely out of hand. “In other words,” the statement continues, “the fascists recognise that they can no longer rule in the old way.”<sup>2</sup>

The regime has begun to tinker with apartheid in order to entrench white domination. Among the reforms have been the new constitution, which gives

to Coloured and Indian people a sham form of representation in parliament, and the Black Local Authorities Act, which claims to give “urban Blacks” a greater measure of self-government over the urban ghettos.

President Tambo’s statement emphasizes that these measures are a reaction to the growing revolutionary upsurge of the oppressed majority in our country and poses the question: “What intermediate objectives should we set ourselves, building on what we have achieved, and in preparation for the next stage in our forward march to victory?”

In a key passage the President lays out the forces and structures constituting the offensive against apartheid:

“Our revolutionary struggle rests on four pillars. These are, first, the all-round vanguard activity of the underground structures of the ANC, second, the united mass action of the peoples, third, our armed offensive spearheaded by Umkhonto we Sizwe and fourth, the international drive to isolate the apartheid regime . . .”<sup>3</sup>

This article tries to examine some implications of the second “pillar”, the united mass action of the peoples, in the light of the experience of the world working-class movement, and especially the theoretical contribution of Georgi Dimitrov on the questions of the united and popular fronts.

Mass popular resistance to apartheid and white rule has reached unprecedented heights in our country. As never before, broad layers of the working people, youth, women, and the intelligentsia are being drawn into political activity. This development, by its own momentum, has opened up possibilities for developing new forms of struggle and drawing in even wider sections of our peoples. But the organization of mass popular resistance poses special problems both at the level of practical activity and of theoretical understanding.

For Communists this new situation brings special responsibilities. As Lenin pointed out:

“To bring political knowledge to the workers, the social-democrats (ie the Communists) must go among all classes of the population, must despatch units of their army in all directions . . . We must take upon ourselves the task of organizing a universal political struggle . . . in such a manner as to obtain the support of all opposition strata for the struggle and for our party.”<sup>4</sup>

We should note Lenin’s emphasis on the broadness of the task facing the workers’ party, which must address itself to *all* classes and *all* opposition strata.

In the art of going to the broad masses, much can be learnt from the experience in the 1930s of the Popular Front against Fascism and War and from its theoretical leader, Georgi Dimitrov. But in applying these lessons to our own struggle, we must constantly be aware of Dimitrov's warning to the Seventh Congress of the Communist International (CI) in 1935:

"It is necessary in each country to investigate, study and ascertain the national peculiarities, the specific national features . . . and map out accordingly effective methods and forms of struggle. Lenin persistently warned us against . . . stereotyped methods . . . mechanical levelling and identification of tactical rules, of rules of struggle."<sup>5</sup>

It is especially when approaching the problem of work among the broadest masses and the non-proletarian classes and strata that we should heed Lenin's advice to display "the utmost flexibility in . . . tactics"<sup>6</sup>. But such tactical flexibility must never be confused with opportunism or abdication of the ideological struggle.

## Forms of Struggle

Dimitrov's address to the Seventh Congress of the CI in 1935 was the culmination of many years of struggle by the working class against the growing menace of fascism. This struggle included armed confrontations and street battles. But it also included the struggle of the working-class movement "with itself", especially in reaching a clearer understanding of the nature of fascism.

Although it fell to Dimitrov to present the final formulation, this process of understanding was a collective one, in which the experience of many Communist Parties (for example, the French, Italian and Bulgarian parties) played an important part.<sup>7</sup>

The basic strategy worked out by Dimitrov and adopted by the CI was to form the broadest possible front of democratic classes and strata on the basis of the defence of democratic rights and against fascism and war. At the core of this broad popular front was to be a united front of workers' parties and organizations, based on a pact between the Communists and Social-Democrats and the uniting of their respective trade union centres.

The binding force of this front and its dynamic element was to be joint action:

"The CI puts no conditions for unity of action except . . . an elementary condition acceptable to all workers, viz that the unity of action be directed against fascism, against the offensive of capital, against the threat of war, against the class enemy."<sup>8</sup>

Dimitrov predicted that joint action would prove a powerfully attractive force, drawing into the anti-fascist struggle social groups and forces that had hitherto remained passive or neutral.<sup>9</sup> Unity of action was the indispensable basis for the development of political and organizational unity. This was



because it is possible to get agreement to act on immediate issues more quickly than it is possible to achieve unity on political and ideological issues<sup>10</sup>.

More important: "Unity of views is worked out best of all in joint struggle against the class enemy already today."<sup>11</sup> The chief stress was to be laid on developing mass action locally, to be carried out by the local organizations.<sup>12</sup>

Some forms of joint action put forward included co-ordinated actions in individual factories, at the local, regional, and national levels, amongst the women and youth, and in the co-operative movements, sports bodies and cultural groups. Special stress was laid on drawing in the large masses of still unorganized workers<sup>13</sup>.

### **Working-class Core**

Essential to the effective development of such a mass movement was the solid core of working-class parties and organizations. "The fundamental, the most decisive thing in establishing the anti-fascist Popular Front is resolute action of the revolutionary proletariat."<sup>14</sup> In practical terms this meant, under the conditions of those times, a political pact between the Communists and the Social-Democratic parties. Even more important was the task of uniting the trade unions in each country into a single federation. (At that time the unions in most countries were divided into Red (Communist) and "Yellow" (socialist) federations.)

Dimitrov insisted that the approach to trade union unity should be based not on the attitudes of individual leaders of the "Yellow" trade unions, "but primarily on the question of where the mass of the workers are to be found . . . We must make the question of the struggle for trade union unity the central issue."<sup>15</sup> But unity was to be based on principles, though these would be broad: the struggle against fascism and for internal trade union democracy. This last point was important: Dimitrov insisted that where weaker Red unions were to join up with stronger socialist unions, the former must retain the right to propagate their views.<sup>16</sup> Unity would not be a step forward if the compromises it would inevitably require would mean lowering the level of militancy of the working people. On the contrary, if compromises had to be made, they must lay the basis for *raising* the militancy and level of struggle as a whole.

In insisting on this point, Dimitrov was hammering home the lessons of Lenin concerning the necessity, but also the conditions, for tactical shifts and compromises. "It is entirely a matter," Lenin wrote, "of knowing how to apply these tactics in order to *raise* — not lower — the *general* level of prole-

tarian class-consciousness, revolutionary spirit and ability to fight and win.”<sup>17</sup> This knowledge, this ability to find a way between flexibility of tactics and unswerving adherence to principle and to the final goal, was the special responsibility with which the Communists were charged in the strategy of the united front. According to Dimitrov:

“In the struggle to establish the united front, the importance of the Communist Party increases extraordinarily . . . The CP can ensure the mobilization of the widest masses . . . only if they strengthen their own ranks in every respect, if they develop their initiative, pursue a Marxist-Leninist policy and apply correct, flexible tactics which take into account the actual situation and alignment of class forces.”<sup>18</sup>

It is important to add that neither Dimitrov nor Lenin (whom Dimitrov is following closely on this point) saw this ability of the Communists as something God-given or self-evident. On the contrary, it was the duty of Communists to strive to live up to and attain the ability to carry out this task. This meant “carefully studying the actual situation and the alignment of class forces,” Dimitrov warned. “We must mercilessly root out the weakness, not infrequently observed among our comrades, for cut-and-dried schemes, lifeless formulas and ready-made patterns.”<sup>19</sup>

The Communists also had special responsibilities in the area of ideological struggle. The formation of a broad front on the basis of a minimum agreed programme of joint action was aimed at convincing the masses of the incorrectness of reformist policies. It did *not* mean a reconciliation with reformist ideology and practice.

In a passage of special importance to our own struggle, Dimitrov warned against the wrong conception that a contradiction existed between proletarian internationalism and the best revolutionary and national traditions of the masses.

“We for our part must develop an extensive ideological struggle based on clear, popular arguments and a correct, well-thought-out approach to the peculiarities of the national psychology of the masses of the people . . . Communists who do nothing to link up the present struggle with the peoples’ revolutionary traditions and past voluntarily hand over to the fascist falsifiers all that is valuable in the historical past of the nation . . .”<sup>20</sup>

It was precisely through national forms of the class struggle that the international interests of the proletariat could be successfully defended<sup>21</sup>

Having established these basic principles of the strategy and tactics of the popular front, and the part of the Communists in implementing them, Dimitrov went on to discuss the crucial links between theory and practice.

In the first place it was necessary to define the enemy’s most vulnerable point, in this case the vulnerable point of fascism. Dimitrov defined the

“Achilles heel” of fascism very simply: its social composition was extremely heterogeneous.<sup>22</sup> Fascism posed as the champion of the nation as a whole, but in fact represented the most reactionary elements of the capitalist class. It followed that the development of a broad front must be based on discovering those interests of the various strata that could not be satisfied by the fascists, but instead were being ignored or trampled upon.

“In every country there are certain key questions . . . agitating vast masses of the people . . . around which the struggle for the united front must be developed.”<sup>23</sup>

Secondly, these key questions had to be taken up and expressed in clear language that the masses could understand.

“We must learn to talk to the masses, not in the language of book formulas, but in the language of fighters for the cause of the masses whose every word and every idea reflect the innermost thoughts and sentiments of the masses.”<sup>24</sup>

Finally, it was necessary to be ready to find new forms of struggle and new organizational methods so that, as the mass movement developed, it could go over from defensive actions to offensive actions leading (in the conditions of that time) to a mass political strike.

### **National Democratic Revolution**

In trying to apply the lessons of Dimitrov and the Popular Front to our own times and our own struggle, it is just as important to understand what is different as to see what is the same. The differences are very simple but also very important.

Firstly, our struggle is a national democratic revolution whose main content is the national liberation of the African people, leading to a democratic state in which all oppressed minorities will find the fullest expression of their aspirations and interests. It is a struggle for majority rule against a small white minority that has monopolised political and economic power.

Secondly, the context in which the question of mass action has been raised (not abstractly, but by life itself), and in which organizations like the democratic trade unions and the United Democratic Front have emerged, is one in which the popular masses are on the offensive and hold the initiative. In this respect our situation differs radically from that in the 1930s when the working class was on the defensive against the fascist onslaught.

The first difference — the national democratic nature of our revolution — has two important implications. In the first place, it means that a strong objective basis exists for consolidating the unity of all classes, strata and national groups among the oppressed black majority on the basis of the struggle for majority rule. Though it would be wrong to underestimate, or



even deny, the existence of class and ethnic differences among the oppressed, it would be more wrong, and even dangerous, to exaggerate them.

This means that it is not difficult to identify those issue around which the broadest possible unity of the oppressed can be forged. As Dimitrov put it, "The path is indicated by life itself and by the initiative of the masses themselves."<sup>25</sup> This is what Comrade Tambo meant when he stated that "the formation of the UDF was a product of our people's determination to be their own liberators."<sup>26</sup>

Secondly, the national democratic character of our revolution enables us to identify the "Achilles heel" of our enemy as precisely and in as few — though different — words as Dimitrov did. *The most vulnerable point of the white oppressors is their small number and their diminishing proportion in relation to the total population.* The significance of this simple formulation can be brought out by a couple of quotations. In October 1976 Dr Gerrit Viljoen, now Minister of National Education but then head of the Broederbond, articulated the immediate response of the racist regime to the mass uprisings of that year.

One of the most serious implications of the uprisings, he said, was that they had shown that the whites lacked the resources to provide a *permanently* effective police function in the townships. Therefore it was necessary to give Africans "a form of self-responsibility (selfverantwoordelikheid) for the maintenance of their internal law and order and for the control of hooliganism in the Black urban areas."<sup>27</sup> In other words, because of the small numbers of whites, it would be necessary to make increasing use of Africans to police themselves.

The second quotation comes from *Beeld*, the Afrikaans newspaper closest to PW Botha and the "reformist" group in the Nationalist Party. *Beeld* wrote:

"In 1936 the Afrikaners still made up 11.68% of South Africa's population. The percentage has fallen to a meagre 7.23% in 1980. Over the same period the white group . . . has increased by 125.96%, the browns by 239.46% and the black population by 230.33%.

"From such statistics a right-thinking person can form only one conclusion: Afrikaners will very soon become altogether too few to man on their own the civil service, police-force and army. And if we can't do it on our own, how on earth can we hope to continue to dominate the other population groups."<sup>28</sup>

From these simple but harsh facts has developed the racists' reform programme. The Black Local Authorities are to police the townships specifically by controlling accommodation, which is to be the linchpin of the new, tighter controls in terms of the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill. And the Coloured and Indian groups are to provide the cannon-fodder for the army and the pen-pushers at the lower levels of the state apparatus.

This is the response of the ruling group to their own most vulnerable spot — it is their attempt to cover up their “Achilles heel”.

A proper understanding of the second major difference between Dimitrov’s situation and our own struggle — the fact that we are on the offensive — also tells us how we can strike most effectively at that “Achilles heel” and destroy white minority rule. To find the answer we can go back to Dimitrov. Writing about the difference between the united front (workers’ organizations only) and the popular front (also peasant, petit-bourgeoisie and bourgeois democrats), he stated:

“Some comrades are quite needlessly racking their brains over the problem of what to begin with — the united proletarian front or the antifascist popular front . . . The united proletarian front and the antifascist popular front are connected by the living dialectics of struggle . . . they are interwoven, the one passing into the other in the process of the practical struggle . . .”<sup>29</sup>

It is in this sense that we should seek the answer to questions posed by united mass action: its dialectical relation to the other “pillars” of our struggle, the ANC underground, the armed struggle and the international solidarity campaign. That the level of development of these four “pillars” has been uneven is the manifestation of a universal law of social development. It means that our movement must be ready to shift the emphasis of struggle as conditions unfold. It also opens up positive possibilities for developing the mass struggle.

### **The Freedom Charter**

As a result of its armed actions and of the ANC’s underground political work, the prestige and standing of our movement among the masses are today higher than ever before. The Freedom Charter, the programme of our national democratic revolution, has become the principal rallying point and inspiration of the oppressed majority and democratic whites. Today it is around the Freedom Charter that all political forces and groupings are obliged to define their positions. It is this *political fact* that provided the basis for the emergence of the United Democratic Front and shows the way to its future development.

It is not necessary for an organization such as the UDF to take up a formal position in regard to the Freedom Charter. That position has been defined by life itself. As Mac Maharaj pointed out in an incisive contribution to *Mayibuye*, the UDF is not an alliance but a front of organizations that express their position in terms of adherence to the Freedom Charter.

What is important is not that adherence to the Charter be a condition of membership to the UDF, but that those member organizations who adhere

to the Charter should through patient and brotherly discussion, and even more by joint action, make ever more evident the central importance of the Charter and its historical role in the unfolding struggle.

This being the case, it is not necessary, either, that artificial minimum conditions be formulated which would fall below the Charter in terms of political elaboration and which might be seized upon to block the open discussion and joint action which develop in the light of the ideals of the Charter. It is the task of the ANC and of the Communists to provide the ideological leaven that will raise the mass struggle to ever greater heights. More important still, it is the task of these vanguard organizations to define the concrete tasks ahead and discover the issues around which mass action on the broadest possible basis can be instigated. In the words of Lenin:

“It is necessary to know at every moment how to find the particular link in the chain which must be grasped with all one’s strength in order to keep the whole chain in place and prepare to move on resolutely to the next link.”<sup>30</sup>

The guiding principle in seeking that link is provided by Dimitrov: to define the enemy’s most vulnerable point. If that vulnerable point is the enemy’s inability to go on ruling in the old way, and the necessity he finds himself in to develop ways of enlisting sections of the oppressed in their own domination, then it follows that the concrete tasks of the mass struggle must be aimed at frustrating this aim.

It is in this sense that we should understand the following key passage in Comrade Tambo’s address:

“We must begin to use our accumulated strength to destroy the organs of government of the apartheid regime. We have to undermine and weaken its control over us, exactly by frustrating its attempts to control us . . . rendering the enemy’s instruments of authority unworkable . . . (and) creating conditions in which the country becomes increasingly ungovernable.”<sup>31</sup>

Already much has been achieved along these lines, as the address notes. Much more can be done. The most vicious of the three Koornhof Bills, the Genocide Bill, has not yet been made law. Mass actions must be developed to try to stop it. If it is legislated, means of struggle must be discovered to attempt to make it inoperable.

In this respect a key condition will be to follow through on the successful boycott action against the Black Local Authorities elections by making these puppet bodies inoperable and bringing about their collapse. Similar strategies will have to be worked out in respect of the Coloured and Indian groups’ participation in the new tricameral parliament. Such joint actions should aim to draw in the widest possible array of political and social forces. Our movement holds the high ground on the South African political terrain at the



present time. Those who refuse to join such joint actions, whether for sectarian political reasons or out of sheer opportunism, will define themselves out of the struggle. The masses themselves will see to that.

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# COLOURED ROLE IN THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

By Matthew de Bruyn

It is possible to catalogue and examine a host of legislation imposed on the black communities, including the Coloured, but this is not the intention here. The purpose of this article is to try to understand the significance of at least some of the past events within the community. It is hoped that in this way we will have a better understanding of what we face in the Western Cape where they form the majority of the population.

The regime has no real future to offer the community, whereas we do. However, as communists we know that we cannot take it for granted that our path will be followed automatically. We shall have to work for our success in a planned and sensitive way. Ours is a struggle for the hearts and minds of people, without which our revolution cannot succeed.

There are signs of a tremendous political awakening in the South Western region of our country. Our people there are conscious of the traditional approach of the regime, namely that of using the Coloureds in the manoeuvres to maintain their position of power. On our side, we need to reach the community and give it confidence in the sort of alternative society we envisage.

P.W. Botha sleeps restlessly these days, dreaming of being overrun by ANC and Russian communist penetration and so, while the statute books groan under the weight of racist filth, he issues a hollow appeal for Coloured rights.

The regime, using all reserves at its disposal, its tremendous financial resources, all the Coloured agents it can find, is bent on drawing the Coloured and Indian into its fold. One need only wonder where the impoverished Labour Party got the funds to engage a costly Nationalist Party firm of political consultants whose function will be to help raise funds and sell the new constitution to the Coloured community. This gives some idea of the seriousness of the regime and the challenge facing our movement.

### **What do we call ourselves?**

A number of radical intellectuals attach the cumbersome prefix “so-called” to the word Coloured. It is understandable why they are so anxious to escape the stigma of all which has taken place in the past. Someone once asked, “are some people trying to reconcile the opposing forces of colour which are mixed in their own genes?”

However, only a minority share these misgivings. Most call themselves Coloured and speak about “ons bruin mense” with the same confidence as Afrikaners or Africans speak of themselves.

Coloured ancestors were the first enslaved and what we have today is the living offspring of miscegenation. Despite the obsession of the South African regime with colour and race purity, there are in fact no reliable methods of classifying people in racial compartments. The use of the term “so-called” in the case of the Coloured and the non-use of the term “so-called” in the case of other racial groups implies that the others are pure. Whilst the Coloureds are a greater mixture than most, there is really no such thing as race purity.

Those who use the epithet “so-called” are apparently unaware of the insult they hurl at this national group by denying its existence. The usage suggests that you might be something else, but what label they prefer, they do not say. To use the term Coloured is not to deny that:

‘We have actually been South Africans for a long time — at least in essence though not in terms of privilege’. (Adam Small *Die Eerste Steen*)

The story is told of Trotsky who when asked if he was a Jew answered “I am a social democrat”. The Soviet system subsequently showed just how national groups could develop if given the fullest opportunity to do so, taking pride in their origins and playing their fullest part in the united efforts of the Soviet people in building a new society.

### **Dr. A.E. Abdurahman: An era which needs to be understood**

During the 1938-39 period, when all radicals in the Cape were involved in the activities of the National Liberation League, Dr. A, as he was known, was in



alliance with the Cape Town City Council bosses, and at a national level he was a Smuts man. This however cannot detract from the very progressive role he played in his earlier days, particularly at the time when British and Boer were conniving to establish the Union of South Africa. In those days Dr. Abdurahman occupied the centre of the stage. He established and led the African People's Organisation (APO) for many years.

After the British took the Cape in 1806, slaves were emancipated in 1834 and a representative government later introduced, which provided for a non-racial franchise. A property and later a literacy qualification, however, kept the majority of Coloureds and Africans off the voters' roll. The constitution was "colour blind" only in form. Nevertheless, the amount of political leverage possessed by the community, though small, was sufficient to protect them from the worst discriminations and inspire a feeling of loyalty to the British crown. It had put an end to slavery, taken up arms in their defence against the Boer, introduced labour laws applicable to workers of all races, and allowed social integration with other groups. In stark contrast to the comparative liberalism of the Cape at that time, politics in Natal, Transvaal and the Free State were a strictly 'whites only' affair. It is this background which has had much to do with the subsequent developments in the political life and struggles in our country.

The 1910 Act of Union excluded all peoples of colour from both houses of parliament and denied them the vote in the three northern provinces. It was this Westminster constitution that put the stamp of second-class citizenship on Africans, Coloureds and Indians and doomed them to the status of subject people.

Their leaders protested, conducted campaigns for an open non-racial franchise and sent deputations to put their case before the British people. Dr. Abdurahman played an unforgettable role. He told the APO conference in 1912 "that the Whites generally regarded his people as pariahs — banned from the DRC church by statute, from schools and the army; and doomed to a condition worse than slavery". He said "the division into hostile camps would give rise to a solid front of African and Coloured".

Dr. A was deeply impressed by the British Labour Party, and came back from England emphasizing the need for strong working-class unity. However he was disillusioned by the policies pursued by the South African white working class and those who represented them. At a later stage, Creswell the South African Labour Party leader, accused him of being an ally of de Beers and a bulwark of the mining houses. Dr. A replied by listing the colour bars that the Labour Party had either sponsored or proposed.

Working-class unity received an even more serious blow from the Mines and Works (Amendment) Act of 1926 restoring the colour bar on the mines. Unlike the earlier discriminatory statute of 1912, the act put Coloureds in the position of privilege formerly reserved for Whites, but prohibited Africans from doing skilled work.

Since all parliamentary parties upheld white supremacy, Coloured voters could only choose between evils. A mass boycott of the polls might have been effective, but was never seriously contemplated. Instead of organising mass struggles, the Coloured elite of teachers, ministers, businessmen and artisans concentrated on extracting whatever benefits they could derive from the vote. It was their only leverage. Candidates in constituencies with a large black electorate often employed APO branch officials as local election agents.

Electioneering at this low level of participation formed part of Coloured and indeed African political culture in the Cape, in sharp contrast to the extra-parliamentary kinds of protest relied upon by voteless blacks in the Northern Provinces.

The Coloured community benefitted in more substantial ways from their share of the franchise. Coloured, Indian and White were classified as 'employees' under the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924, and therefore eligible for membership of registered trade unions and Industrial Councils. Pass-bearing Africans were excluded, an act of discrimination that drove a wedge between them and the Coloured working man who was drawn into the orbit of the white labour aristocracy. As the collective bargaining system took shape, Abdurahman's vision of black working class unity steadily receded.

The war and people's opposition 1938-39 put paid to the Hertzog government's segregation proposals. Smuts became the new prime minister and many thousands of blacks volunteered for the army. Dr. A, by now ailing and resentful of the United Party's attempt to segregate his community, kept aloof.

### **1943: The Coloured Affairs Department comes into being**

Midway through the war, Smuts started a new process of an organised 'Coloured Affairs Department', a committee of leading figures in the community under the aegis of the Department of the Interior. Communists and Coloured radicals protested vigorously against this step towards a segregated administrative structure, parallel to the detested Native Affairs Department. Coloured teachers and professionals formed an Anti-CAD movement to unite all non-Europeans against discriminatory laws. They adopted a 10-point programme and launched the Non-European Unity Movement.

1948 saw the advent of the Nationalist party to power. Dr. Malan the party leader and new Prime Minister declared that

“the only salvation (for the European race) would come from a nationalist victory. Nothing else could save whites from coloured blood, black peril and red communism, the last being their greatest enemy”.

Except for the threat to deport Indians, the Nationalist Government in its 35 years of office has carried out its apartheid programme. The volume of racist legislation is enormous and horrifying. After establishing its police state it is now engaging in armed aggression against neighbouring countries and trying to impose itself on them.

Coloured radicals resisted the introduction of apartheid legislation together with militants of other racial groups. There was also a conservative stratum of society led by George Golding but his appeal was limited. By and large, the Coloureds turned their back on segregated institutions and usually chose to withdraw rather than take part in mass struggle. This condition of alienation found a natural outlet in the strategy of boycott which the government in fact found possible to accommodate.

The most important characteristic of this period was the role of the Teachers' League of South Africa, the Anti-CAD and the Non-European Unity Movement with the predominant membership of Coloured teachers and a few other professionals. They were highly organised, had money, facilities, and enjoyed prestige in the community because of their position in society. From this vantage point they gave expression to the demands of the people in radical terms. On the other hand they were shy of taking action. They discouraged people from joining demonstrations, strikes, or the Defiance Campaign organised by the ANC and its allies. Instead they concentrated all their venom on segregated bodies and by converting boycott into a principle, maintained their so-called purity and safeguarded their careers. They were semi-state servants and therefore part beneficiaries of the system.

Colour soon took the place of class in the Anti-CAD polemics. It lumped all whites together under the label 'Herrenvolk' and concentrated the attack on communists as though they were the greatest enemy. In so doing the Anti-CAD warded off the danger of prosecution for subversion and turned its followers away from non-racial radicalism. In the words of our heroic revolutionary Basil February

“the main achievement of the Anti-CAD and the Non-European Unity Movement was to immunise generations of Coloured teachers and students against the liberating influence of Marxist-Leninist theory and isolate them from the mainstream of national resistance”.



During this period the Coloured voters were removed from the voters' roll. They reacted against this removal and responded favourably to a protest strike called by the Franchise Action Council in 1951. The Non-European Unity Movement and the Anti-CAD made no protest on the grounds that the Coloured vote was not worth preserving. When train apartheid was introduced in Cape Town the Train Apartheid Resistance Committee was formed on which the Anti-CAD had a majority. They called for volunteers to defy, but when the people came forward in their thousands, the leadership failed them. Likewise when Bus Apartheid was threatened in Cape Town the Coloured People's Congress approached the Anti-CAD with a view to presenting a united front, but Kies and company refused to respond, preferring to call it 'a communist stunt'. The Coloured community paid dearly for the political weaknesses of this stratum and the sterility of the Anti-CAD leadership. We need to ensure that this malady does not recur.

By the time of the Sharpeville massacre and the turbulent period of the "State of Emergency" in 1960, when thousands of Congressites were jailed, the Teachers' League of South Africa and the Anti-CAD had more or less melted away. The more honest elements found themselves more at home in the Congress movement.

This era ended with the banishment, banning, exile and imprisonment of many of South Africa's finest patriots who were members or supporters of the Congress movement, including the Coloured People's Congress.

### **The Labour Party**

A great deal of heart searching had gone on during the 1960 State of Emergency. Some Cape Afrikaner Nationalists suggested that Coloured representation in parliament would be acceptable, some even suggested doing away with the pass laws. But Verword, the then Prime Minister, rejected these ideas and decided on parallel development, with the Western Cape as a Coloured Preference Area.

The Prevention of Political Interference Act of 1968 prohibited black and white from belonging to the same political party or attending non-racial political meetings. By then Dr. Oscar Wollheim was an MPC, representing a Coloured constituency. The Liberal Party decided to dissolve. During the latter part of its life-span some of its members and a small discussion group called the Forum Club had established a working relationship and joined hands against such issues as cafe and theatre apartheid. Like the Anti-CAD the Forum Club had fought shy of the liberation movement and the mass

struggle associated with it. As was the case with the Anti-CAD its mentors were of Trotskyist orientation.

The Labour Party came into existence in 1965, in time to prepare for participation in the election to the Coloured Persons' Representative Council established in 1968.

The party campaigned on an anti-apartheid ticket, demanded equal franchise rights and adopted a number of positive resolutions, but the elections never really excited mass interest. The community fought shy, particularly in the Cape Peninsula and the main towns. Unfortunately, too, many members of the Labour Party limited their interests to the Council or Management Committees and neglected mass work. The CRC was prorogued in 1975 and the Labour Party lost its platform. Had the party engaged in protest activity outside the confines of the Council Chamber — as it indeed threatened to do on a couple of occasions — then it would no doubt have attracted more people to its ranks. But the party leader Hendrickse proclaimed his party to be a party of negotiation and not protest.

When the Coloured people lost their Cape Municipal Council Franchise in 1972, there was no outcry, despite the fact that this was a right which they had enjoyed since 1853. At one time they had no less than 7 city councillors.

### **1973/'76/'80/'81 — Mass Protest**

The tide of revolt against apartheid and the racist regime reached new heights in the 1970's. One of its conspicuous features was the wave of strikes among black workers that began in Natal in 1973, spread among miners on the Witwatersrand and moved to the Eastern and Western Cape. By 1976 this strike wave flowed into the student revolt which developed in Soweto, inspiring students everywhere. As mass struggle took on new dimensions, the tide of militancy rose in the Western Cape. The South African Students' Organisation (SASO) and Black People's Convention (BPC), both of which allowed Coloured membership, played a very important part in building closer ties between African and Coloured. Since 1973 in particular there have been important moves to build closer sporting links between the different communities. The South Peninsula Education Fellowship (SPEF) started by the Teachers' League people, provided students with some experience of organisation and contacts, which stood them in good stead for the organisation of the schools boycott. Many of the students had become impatient with the political inhibitions of the teachers and proceeded to organise what proved to be a highly disciplined and sophisticated boycott. They worked for, and gained, the support of significant sections of the

community, including parents, ministers of religion and trade unions. Even principals of schools resolved that "they could not act as government agents in trying to end the boycott".

Despite the racialism to which the young people are subjected, they showed great maturity in demanding the reinstatement of three dismissed white teachers and by demanding an end to all "racial education". The leadership of the boycott was taken up and provided for by the township schools. In addition, the staff and students at the University of Western Cape played a significant supporting role and even 1,000 University of Cape Town students supported them. During this period the students, the striking workers and the consumers all experienced the lesson of unified struggle in action. Township barriers were broken down as black and brown struggled together, faced police harassment, brutality and jail.

The victories achieved by the peoples of the neighbouring states of Angola, Mozambique and Zimbabwe had a direct influence on the morale of our people, as did the struggle of SWAPO in Namibia. The exploits of our own MK combatants stirred the imagination of the youth who began to join the mainstream of struggle in their search for an effective answer to the rape of District 6, inferior education, the rising cost of living, unemployment, low wages, lack of representation, anti-trade unionism of the bosses and the state, and the total neglect of the community.

The tide had turned in the Western Cape, and it had become an active front in the struggle for national liberation.

### **The New Constitution**

It was in the face of this tremendous reawakening that P.W. Botha took on the task of winning over the Coloured and Indian people into accepting his so-called reforms. The new constitution is the product of an all-white parliament that during the 70 years of its existence has persistently curtailed but never broadened the rights and liberties of the black majority. The party that sponsored it is the party of apartheid and white supremacy. Botha's constitution consolidates a social order that concentrates all effective power in the hands of the white majority.

Botha says that the Africans are politically "accommodated in the homelands". By his own admission, they are an integral part of the constitution together with mass removals and deprivation of citizenship.

Even Bantustan puppets, in spite of being on the racist regime's payroll, have raised their voices in protest against the constitution. How much more



do the millions who take their lead from the African National Congress resent being deprived of their right to genuine nationhood.

Botha is hopelessly out of tune with the new social forces and classes which need to be taken into account in order to build a modern state. The bulk of the population, the peasants and workers, are excluded from Botha's parliament. Its three houses, for whites, Coloureds and Indians, each bearing the imprint of its racial past, will be elected by its 'own voters' and manage its 'own affairs'. The new parliament will be composed of white, Coloured and Indian members roughly in order of 4 : 2 : 1 — a proportion that ensures control by whites.

The role of the black minorities will be that of handlangers, musket bearers and sub-agents of the white baas in administering the institutions and discrimination of apartheid. Only 8% of the population of South Africa voted in Botha's all-white referendum on November 2, 1983. To implement the constitution, however, he is dependent on the support of the black majority.

### **The Future**

In keeping with Verwoerd's scheme to make the Western Cape a Coloured Preference Area, huge townships have been set up, such as Mitchells Plain which, when it is complete, will have about 48,000 dwellings. The Mamre Monster is planned to accommodate one million. In these areas people have to fight hard in order to survive. High rents, electricity charges and fares take virtually all the money they earn and there are virtually no amenities. There is nothing worth while to prefer in these areas. One quarter of the community lives below the breadline, one fifth are homeless and crime in the Cape Peninsula is on a par with the worst in the world.

At the same time the regime, as part of the power-game, purposefully proceeds to encourage the growth of an elite. In 1980 there were just over 24 thousand Coloured teachers. According to the Minister of Internal Affairs, there are now 11 thousand Coloured teachers on the same salary scale as Whites. The University of the Western Cape, which started with a roll of 169 in 1960, now has about 4,000. The University of Cape Town, which had dropped its Coloured enrolment to 361 in 1960, now has over 1,000. Even Stellenbosch took over 100 Coloured students in 1982. In technical colleges in 1982 there were 3,774 full-time and 2,528 part-time students. There are now 43 Coloured school inspectors, 52 advisers and 76 university lecturers. The South African Coloured Corps Special Services battalion was established in 1972 and by 1977 there were about 1,000 youths in training. Whereas, in the last war, the highest rank open to a Coloured officer was that of sergeant

major, today Coloured officers are steadily being pushed into the higher ranks of authority. By 1978, there were approximately 100 fully fledged Coloured paratroopers. In banks, post offices, insurance companies, the retail and wholesale trades, Blacks have been drawn into better positions, and are now doing work unheard of a few years ago. The picture that one sees in shops and offices in Cape Town and other major cities today is very different from the lilywhite one which was previously in evidence, particularly across the counter. This is a far cry from the days when the regime saw fit to reserve the job of lift attendant for whites only.

It is precisely on this relatively more privileged stratum of society that the regime pins its hopes for co-option in its struggle against the African majority, as led by the African National Congress and its allies. But this is the admission of David Curry of the Labour Party:

"The middle class has arrived, but it has become apathetic or opposed to what the Labour Party is trying to do. Being much better off economically, it is even more insulted by the apartheid system and tends to be attracted to the United Democratic Front".

Bearing in mind the need of the regime to secure the identification and participation by the rising middle class, the new constitution can turn out to be a 'hollow shell'.

The Labour Party decided to participate in the new constitution even before seeing it in its final form. The party then called a number of meetings at which it met with outright hostility. Subsequently it found itself isolated, even from Buthelezi's South African Black Alliance. Management committee members have such little influence as to be meaningless, and a section of teachers from whom the Labour Party got some support in the past are today no longer enthusiastic. The Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), the majority church and church school in the community, another source from which the Labour Party formerly drew some support, certainly in the rural areas, has undergone a significant metamorphosis, which means that the party will get little joy from that quarter either. The Labour Party will fail in its attempt to sell the constitution to the Coloured community, however big the subsidy from Botha and however expert his political consultants may be.

In the Western Cape alone, there were well over 60 community organisations a couple of years ago. This figure is fast on the increase. In their struggles large numbers of their spokesmen use the quotation from the Freedom Charter "There shall be houses, security and comfort for all". Two years ago, there were 29 sports clubs with an international status (i.e. non-racial); this is more than in any other centre. Women and youth organisations

are growing in the residential areas and not just at the leadership level. The churches are stirring and it is no longer easy for the clergy to stand by idly in the face of government repression of their flock.

The publications that are put out all reflect an awareness of their responsibilities and a forward movement in people's organisations. There is a strong Coloured presence in the United Democratic Front.

### **The Trade Unions**

Perhaps it is on the labour front that we face our biggest challenge. A great victory was won when the Labour Relations Act of 1981 repealed discriminatory clauses that had plagued industry and impeded African progress for more than half a century. By amending the definition of employee to include Africans, parliament removed the barrier erected between them and the rest of the working class by the Nationalist Labour Pact Government of 1924. Under the present law, Africans may register their unions, sit on industrial councils and join non-racial open unions. All sections of the working class stand to benefit from the removal of clauses imposing job reservation and trade union segregation, but the benefits will materialise only through hard struggle against racists in the labour movement and their political allies. The regime hopes that this measure will be the means by which it will be able to co-opt the workers into its system in the same way as the new constitution was designed to co-opt the Coloured and Indians into the political system.

All experience shows that it was the militancy of the workers, coupled with economic necessity, which forced the regime to alter its laws relating to Africans and their participation in trade unions. A number of new radical, non-racial trade unions and trade union federations have been established with a membership increasing to a degree which must be of concern to both the employers and the regime. Discussions about unity and joint action are taking place from time to time. The biggest problem which we must face, however, is that of the reactionary white control of TUCSA, which has a membership of 101,145 Whites, 226,860 Coloured and Indians and 102,670 Africans. So long as this majority of black workers remain under white control there is cause for concern in our ranks. We know from experience how the white trade unionist uses his superior position in the factory to secure his position in the union. Our task of reaching and influencing these workers will be a difficult one.

The inertia of the skilled Coloured workers will have to be overcome. It is here that withdrawal symptoms are to be found and one encounters those who complain of being trapped between white and black nationalism. The regime has always recognised this fear and used it to its advantage.





# **"A TALE OF TWO NATIONS"**

## **The Presentation of the National Question in South Africa**

**By Sisa Majola**

Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov, known to us all as Lenin, died sixty years ago, on the 21st of January, 1924. And just as we observed the centenary of Karl Marx's death last year, we shall proceed this year — the 60th after his death — to remember, likewise, the greatness of Lenin's ideas. In particular we shall discuss how he examined the concept of the national question and the right of nations to self-determination.

For Lenin, the right of the oppressed nations to self-determination meant the right to political separation from the oppressor nation, that is, total non-recognition of the oppressor state's claim to authority over the oppressed and the right of the oppressed to substitute a new state of their own choosing. In his theses on the national question, Lenin was mostly defending the adoption of this principle at the First Party Congress (1903) against the wrong views adopted by Rosa Luxemburg and other Polish Marxists as well as members of the Jewish Bund (Liebman and Co.). He maintained:

“By examining the historico-economic conditions of the national movements, we must inevitably reach the conclusion that self-determination of nations means political separation of these nations from alien national bodies, and the formation of an independent national state.”

Of course, Lenin was not unmindful of the question of those oppressed nations within a given state organism who had no desire for geographical secession; recognition of the right to national independence is not synonymous with insistence on geographical secession as a principle. Quite certainly, one may be an exponent of national independence but be a bitter enemy of geographical fragmentation — the fundamental principle, Lenin pointed out, is the demand for self-determination, and this demand “is not the equivalent of a demand for separation, fragmentation and the formation of small states.” This is quite understandable because the people, proceeding from their daily experience, know very well the value of geographical and economic ties and the advantages of a single market and a single state which capitalism has already brought about, as a historical step forward from feudal seclusiveness and absence of common economic life. The people will, therefore, resort to geographic secession (that is, as a matter of principle) “only when national oppression and national friction make joint life absolutely intolerable and hinder any and all economic intercourse.”

Equally, there can be no question of discussing the national question in South Africa without taking into account the dynamic historico-concrete social conditions. Any analysis of the national question in our country must necessarily recognise that basically national relations have their roots in the economic system based on private ownership of the social instruments and means of production, and that consequently relations between our two nations and different nationalities have their origin in history, and are determined by the social and state system and the balance of class forces both inside the country and internationally.

From this approach Lenin demonstrated (like Marx and Engels before him) how national oppression can be done away with by removing the main economic cause. The proletariat — a class which has no private property, that is essentially neither Indian, Coloured nor African, instead which is profoundly internationalist in nature — will then defend and implement the policy of full and unconditional unity, including organisational unity, of the workers of the oppressed nation and those of the oppressor nation; furthermore, on gaining control of political power, the working class will proceed to fuse into a single South African nation, the present White oppressor and Black oppressed nations.



Talking of the class nature of the national question does not, of course, mean equating the national question with the social question. Critics of Marxism often accuse us of reducing the question of nationalities to only class relations. This is an unfair accusation! Marxists do not deny national features and other ethnic peculiarities in any historical community of people; but what we do not deny, either, is the interconnection between classes and nations, that is, the social content of relations between nations. We observe, quite objectively, that in capitalist countries today, despite much achievement in science and production and despite political rhetoric to the contrary, national conflicts, inequality and mistrust are based on the economic system and the capitalist relations of production. That is why, Marx noted 'On Poland', only the "proletarian victory removes the economic and social causes of conflicts and hostility between nationalities."<sup>1</sup>

### **Historico-economic conditions of the national question in South Africa**

Among the more interesting of recent discoveries in archaeology are the fossils of the *Australopithecus* (Man-Ape of the South) in South and East Africa which suggests that it was actually here that man evolved — and whether this be wrong or right, it nevertheless makes nonsense of the racist theories and beliefs that Whites claim South Africa by right of first occupancy against the present African people. This piece of evidence, among others as well, shatters the "mystery" of the fortresses, temples, palaces and sites of ancient mineral workings — copper, gold, iron — spread over present South Africa, which stand marvellously as an indigenous African achievement, obviously baffling the racist cynics of our history who believe them to have been built by a vanished people. For the racist historians, it is altogether inconceivable that African people can ever have had craftsmen skilled enough to build so splendidly — and they say about the Zimbabwe ruins (one of the so-called wonders of the world): "Ag jong, this was probably built by the Phoenicians." Thus in South Africa, like the rest of the continent, our colonisers sought one excuse after another to justify their seizure of territories and robbing our peasant ancestors of their land and compelling them to take up wage labour; and correspondingly, laws were enacted to sanctify this system of land tenure and forced labour. "This overall political power," concluded the late Jack Woddis in one of the studies on colonialism he made in 1972, "was directed to two main objectives — to keep the colonial people in political subjection and to make possible the maximum exploitation of the people and the country's resources."<sup>2</sup>

### **(a) The Imperialist Policy of Colonialism**

As long as capitalism remains what it is, wrote Lenin in *Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, surplus capital will be utilised not for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean the decline in profits for the capitalists, but for the purpose of increasing profits — by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these economically backward countries profits are obviously high, because capital is scarce, the price of land is usually measured by sheer superiority of war materials of the colonising party over the indigenous people, wages are low and raw materials very cheap. Capitalism now found that the old national states, without whose formation it could not have overthrown feudalism, were too cramped for it. Capitalism in these states had developed concentration to such a degree that whole branches of industry were controlled by syndicates, trusts and associations of capitalist multi-millionaires, with the entire world divided up among the “lords of capital” in the form of colonies. Free trade and competition had been superseded by a striving towards monopolies, the seizure of territory for the investment of capital and as sources of raw materials and so on. Lenin said:

“Capitalism has grown into the world system of colonial oppression and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of ‘advanced’ countries,”<sup>3</sup>

In Holland, following the amalgamation of Dutch provinces (situated on the then trading crossroads of Europe) the Dutch East India Company received its charter in 1602, with the government holding a large share in the Company and some of the legislators being themselves directors. The government leased to the Company a monopoly of trade and took a cut of the profits. Policy direction lay with the Governing Council of Seventeen, selected from the list submitted by the Estates of the Provinces. Behaving within its domain much as a sovereign state, the Company sent out expeditions of exploration, acquired colonies and fought wars in defence of its commercial empire.

The colonisation of South Africa began with the arrival in Table Bay of Van Riebeeck to carry out the Dutch Company’s instructions. Subsequently the people of the metropolis (later to include English and French) emigrated to what was an already colonised country. This settler White community systematically conquered every bit of our territory with fire and sword, subjecting us to economic exploitation, using us as ‘live tools’, and in this way establishing themselves as a ruling and oppressing nation over us.

The political, economic and social structure of present South Africa rests on the foundation of the colonial subjugation and enslavement of the Africans. To maintain and perpetuate this structure is the fundamental policy of all sections of the White ruling class. Often, when we hear some people claiming that South Africa is, unlike formerly colonised Angola, Mozambique or Zimbabwe, an independent and truly sovereign state, we the oppressed genuinely marvel at this misreading of history. For whom is South Africa independent? When did South Africa decolonise? Who, then, had been colonised in 1652, and who subsequently has gained his independence? Certainly not the White settler community! The Black people, at present fighting for national independence and self-determination, victims of colonialism since the arrival of the Dutch East India Company, have never experienced decolonisation. The main aim of our struggle, up till this moment, is the decolonisation of South Africa, the national liberation of the oppressed Black nation.

#### **(b) The Special Features of Colonialism In South Africa**

What are the basic features of colonialism? Are such features to be found in South Africa? Obviously, national oppression in itself does not presume colonisation. National conflicts and racial inequality are found in many countries that can hardly be called colonised.

The political essence of colonialism is the direct and overall subordination of one country to another on the basis of state power being in the hands of the dominating foreign power. As pointed out by Jack Woddis in the already cited study on colonialism,

“thus European officials, sometimes accompanied by European-staffed governments and European (or mainly European) assemblies, were the constitutional powers in the colonies. These were protected by European armies or sometimes armies of indigenous troops under European officers. The judges were Europeans and the laws were laid down by Europeans. The prisons were in the hands of Europeans, and so were the higher ranks in the civil administration. Education was controlled by Europeans, based on European history and culture, and limited to the general economic, social and political requirements of the colony-owning power. European missionaries introduced Christianity in competition with the existing religions of the local peoples. Press and other propaganda media were in the hands of Europeans... This was clearly reflected in the laws and Government decrees.”

This was the case in Kenya, Congo, Angola, Mozambique, etc. And in order to maintain this profitable system, the colonial powers prevented the industrialisation of the colonies. They had no interest in creating modern industry because their aim was to exploit the resources — raw materials and cheap labour — to feed their own industrial machines in Europe. In our



continent only Ethiopia and Liberia, by the beginning of the present century, remained sovereign African states. During this century the struggle against colonialism, which became such a major phenomenon in the political history of Africa, led ultimately to the formation of the Organisation of African Unity, which accepted into its membership every new independent African state that had freed itself from colonialism. The OAU proceeds from the correct premise that the whole continent was a historical victim of subdivision and national subjugation by European countries, particularly following the Treaty of Berlin in 1885 which concluded the division of the African continent by the European powers.

A look at the South African political phenomenon immediately calls to mind the characteristics of colonialism as it existed everywhere else in the world — land dispossession, political enslavement, absence of basic democracy for the indigenous people, absence of economic leverage for progress, cultural suffocation and an ideology to sanctify this state of oppression. This is exactly why we, the colonised people, will never abandon our birthright to the ownership and control of the whole territory of South Africa; this is why we assert our right to national independence and self-determination, to choose what kind of future we and our children shall have.

The Republic of South Africa is unquestionably a colonial power and apartheid is a colonial system designed to maintain the pattern of colonial political and economic life. In South Africa colonialism changed its form somewhat, while not altering its essence: the settler colonial community completely severed its cultural ties with the metropolis, assuming a new culture based in the new conditions of the African continent. Yet political domination and economic exploitation continued as in other classical colonies.

The unique level of industrialisation, the creation of modern industry in the South African territory, as distinct from the far away metropolis, rightly characterises the South African political phenomenon as internal colonialism. Our oppressor nation is in the same country with us the colonised and oppressed Black nation. As in all classical colonial situations, we Blacks are not allowed to build up industry in competition with the colonisers. The apartheid 'Republic' has been chosen by and represents only the white fifth of the population of our country. It is an apartheid 'Republic' that exists to advance the sole and exclusive interests of this minority.

Proceeding to counsel the socialists belonging to the oppressor nations, Lenin said:

“A socialist of any of the oppressor nations ... who does not recognise and does not struggle for the right of oppressed nations to self-determination (i.e. the right to secession) is in reality a chauvinist, not a socialist... Only this point of view can lead to a consistent application of the principle of combatting any form of the oppression of nations; it removes mistrust among the proletarians of the oppressor and oppressed nations, makes for a united international struggle for the socialist revolution...” (Lenin, *The Question of Peace*).<sup>4</sup>

The championing of this right to political independence, to self-determination, far from encouraging the formation of small and petty states (as the Bantustan ideologists are attempting to do in their counter-historical march), on the contrary promotes the national formation of one South African state that shall be more in keeping with economic development. Of course we want to unite with our white countrymen, but as equals, not as masters and servants! Of course we want to merge into a single South African nation, but on the basis of democracy! Only this can dispel the distrust the Black people in general and the Black workers in particular have and the anger which these workers of the oppressed nation feel towards the workers of the White oppressor nation — the “labour lieutenants of the capitalist class” — so that finally this distrust and anger will be replaced by a conscious and voluntary alliance.

We reject state privileges for the White oppressor nation. We demand true national independence, a true national state. South Africa belongs to all who live in it, Black and White, and no nation can be free if it oppresses other nations. The White working class in South Africa cannot itself achieve its historic aims and be free from the systematic exploitation by capital so long as it still festers with these racial prejudices, so long as it still occupies a seat at the political ruling table of the capitalist class over the Black nation. It is this nationalism of the oppressor nation, in fact, that is the principal obstacle to democracy and to the struggle of the working class for socialism.

### **(c) The Capitalist Development of the South African Colony**

The export of capital influences and greatly accelerates the development of capitalism in those countries to which it is exported. As Lenin remarked in *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

“While, therefore, the export of capital may tend to a certain extent to arrest development in the capital-exporting countries, it can only do so by expanding and deepening the further development of capitalism throughout the world.”<sup>5</sup>

The internal colonialism in South Africa provided, in an unprecedented way, the accumulation of capital for the capitalist ruling class in the colony itself. The discovery of fabulous rich mineral resources beneath the soil:

diamonds in Griqualand West (1870), gold on the Witwatersrand (1888) brought about not only the ascendancy of monopoly finance capital in South Africa but also the splitting of the society into two opposite classes, namely, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Workers, both black and white, flocked to the diggings from all over the country, from Europe and even from America whilst on the other hand, the new-rich gold and diamond millionaires, backed by powerful financial institutions in Britain and elsewhere, consolidated immense political power through the South African state.

By 1906 the labour force consisted of 94,000 African, 51,000 Chinese (who were repatriated by 1907) and 18,000 Whites (mainly European immigrants). The mines frequently became the theatre of fierce and often bloody class struggles, with the workers demanding trade union recognition (as in May, 1913, when 68,000 Rand miners downed tools demanding an eight-hour working day). The mining millionaires, supported by the government, broke these strikes using police and troops and killing a number of workers in street clashes.

This development of trade unionism was accompanied by the formation of working class political associations with more or less clearly defined socialist objectives, and culminated, eventually, in the formation of the Communist Party of South Africa at a conference in Cape Town in 1921. The conference adopted the manifesto which pledged the newly-born Party to struggle despite any sacrifices it may be called upon to undergo, to hasten the time

“when mankind shall no longer cower under the bludgeon of the oppressor, when the necessities and amenities of life, the comfort and culture, the honour and the power shall be to him who toils, not him who exploits; when none shall be called master and none servant, but all shall be fellow-workers in common.”

This South African capitalist society, however, had certain national imperfections which rendered the immediate achievement of these noble goals impossible. Despite the contradiction between social production and private appropriation, despite the exploitation of labour by capital, the South African White labour movement, typical of the general attitude of the workers of the oppressor nation anywhere, showed an intolerant attitude to their black class brothers. It is true that a revolutionary tendency was also present, leading to the formation in 1915 of the International Socialist League, the predecessor of the Communist Party itself. But the predominant organised White labour force, as it still is to this day, was imbued with the racial chauvinism and aggressive bourgeois nationalism of their “own” capitalist class. As the South African White working class developed, their



political reaction was strengthened and fostered by the national enslavement of the Blacks, in return for a privileged position in political, economic and social pastures. As Lenin remarked:

“Aggressive bourgeois nationalism, which drugs the minds of the workers, stultifies and disunites them in order that the bourgeoisie may lead them by the halter ...”  
(See *Critical Remarks on the National Question*).

Again, let us remember how Lenin lamented about this unfortunate situation for the proletarian struggle at the Seventh Congress of the Second International in Stuttgart, held from August 18 to 24, 1907:

“Only the proletarian class, which maintains the whole of society, can bring about the social revolution. However, as a result of the extensive colonial policy, the European proletarian *partly* finds himself in a position when it is not *his* labour, but the labour of the practically enslaved natives in the colonies, that maintains the whole society. The British bourgeoisie, for example, derives more profit from the many millions of the population of India and other colonies than from the British workers. In certain countries this provides the material and economic basis for infecting the proletariat with colonial chauvinism. Of course, this may be only a temporary phenomenon, but the evil must nonetheless be clearly realised and its causes understood in order to be able to rally the proletariat of all countries for the struggle against such opportunism.”<sup>6</sup>

Equally, when we examine the attitudes and national sentiments of the working class of the oppressed nation, we observe that the age-old oppression of the colonised nation has aroused distrust in this nation in general, even in its proletariat (as already indicated). That is why

“it is therefore the duty of the class conscious communist proletariat of all countries to regard with particular caution and attention the survivals of national sentiments in the countries and among the nationalities which have been oppressed the longest; it is equally necessary to make certain concessions with a view to more rapidly overcoming this distrust and these prejudices.”

As already pointed out, the White working class will never itself be free until the Black people are freed from the yoke of colonialist White supremacy; and furthermore, the unity of the Black and White workers in the struggle for socialism will remain a pipe-dream unless the white workers recognise the right of the Black nation to independence and self-determination. Socialists cannot achieve their great aim without fighting against all oppression of nations, including the nations oppressed by them.

In regard to the nationalism of the oppressed nation which sometimes goes under the term “Black Consciousness” in South Africa, suffice to say that it will, like any other nationalism, pass through various phases, according to the classes that are dominant in the liberation movement at a given time. To uphold retrogressive nationalism in the name of liberation, a kind of

nationalism that breeds hostility between the workers of different nations or nationalities, at a time when their unity is in fact an immediate historical need of the revolution, can only be described as petty-bourgeois national opportunism. While revolutionaries must unconditionally support the nationalism of any oppressed nation that has a general democratic content and that is directed against oppression, Lenin insisted that, at the same time, they should strictly distinguish it from the tendency towards national exclusiveness. "To the workers the important thing is to distinguish the principles of the two trends," he wrote in *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*,

"Insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation fights the oppressor, (we) are always, in every case, and more strongly than anyone else, in favour, for we are the staunchest and most consistent enemies of oppression. But insofar as the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation stands for its own bourgeois nationalism, we stand against it. We fight against the privileges and violence of the oppressor nation, and do not in any way condone strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation."<sup>7</sup>

While struggling against the retrogressive perversion of Black Consciousness, however, we must equally not allow our revolutionary perspective to be carried away and find ourselves losing sight of the nationalism of the oppressor nation, the nationalism of the Afrikaanse Weerstandsbeweging, the South African Ku Klux Klansmen. This was exactly one of the mistakes of Rosa Luxemburg, for which Lenin reprimanded her. Rosa Luxemburg argued that recognition of the right to self-determination is tantamount to supporting the bourgeois nationalism of the oppressed nations; but in her fear of the nationalism of the bourgeoisie of oppressed nations, Rosa Luxemburg was actually playing into the hands of the nationalism of the Russian oppressor nation.

### **The Meaning of the Right to Self-Determination In the South African Context**

A more precise and concrete meaning of the concept of self-determination in the sphere of solving the national question in South Africa is necessary. What are the basic features of the demand for self-determination? How should we approach the question?

Basically, this principle implies the right to determine one's own destiny without dictation, compulsion or pressure by other nations or states; it means the right to determine one's fate in the various spheres of life and development.

But it is necessary to make some qualifications. In South Africa itself, our apartheid rulers have declared that by creating Bantustans for the African

ethnic groups, they are granting them their right to self-determination. Do the Xhosa, Zulu, Sotho, etc. have, in fact, that right to determine their “political and economic status independently, and to solve their own problems, up to and including the formation of an independent state”?

In his writings on the national question Lenin insisted that an abstract presentation of the question is of no use at all.

“Self-determination of nations, from a historico-economic point of view, cannot have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence and the formation of a nation state.”

Self-determination, the right to independent existence in the political sense, is inherently anti-colonial and includes the demand for independence from colonial rule and any other form of national oppression. It therefore incorporates the demand to dismantle the oppressor state power and to assert our independence by creating a new state of our choosing.

This conclusion follows logically from the understanding of the history of imperialism and its division of the world into colonies, and the subsequent national oppression and exploitation of peoples inhabiting those colonies. Anybody who does not understand this precise meaning, who still equates self-determination with (a) autonomy, (b) federation or (c) Bantustan secessions, has not yet grasped the attitude of Marxism-Leninism to the question of self-determination in South Africa.

### **The Merging of Nations Into A Single South African Nation**

The solution of the national question in South Africa can only proceed from the integration of the two nations, under conditions of total equality, into a single South African nation. This fusion of nations, furthermore, can only proceed systematically if it is headed by the working class, the only class found in the two nations that objectively needs unity. We would like to illustrate this proposition by a quotation from a letter Lenin wrote to the Workers and Peasants of Ukraine on December 28, 1919:

“Capital is an international force. To vanquish it, an international workers’ alliance, an international workers’ brotherhood, is needed.

“We are opposed to national enmity and discord, to national exclusiveness. We are internationalists. We stand for the close union and the complete amalgamation of the workers and peasants of all nations in a single world Soviet republic...

“We want a *voluntary* union of nations — a union which precludes any coercion by another — a union founded on complete confidence, on a clear recognition of brotherly unity, on absolutely voluntary consent. Such a union cannot be effected at one stroke; we have to work towards it with the greatest patience and circumspection, so as not to spoil matters and not to arouse distrust, and so that the distrust inherited from centuries of landowner and capitalist oppression, centuries



of private property and the enmity caused by its divisions and redivisions may have a chance to wear off.

“We must, therefore, strive persistently for the unity of nations and ruthlessly suppress everything that tends to divide them, and in doing so we must be very cautious and patient, and make concessions to the survivals of national distrust. We must be adamant and uncompromising towards everything that affronts the fundamental interests of labour in its fight for emancipation from the yoke of capital... In this matter we can afford to wait, and must wait, because the national distrust among the broad mass of peasants and small owners is often extremely tenacious, and haste might only intensify it, in other words, jeopardise the cause of complete and ultimate unity...”<sup>8</sup>

If the aim of our revolution is not only to end the inequality between the Black and White nations, between the African, Indian and Coloured nationalities, and the racial hostility that goes with that national inequality, but also to bring these nations and nationalities together into a single South African nation without any racial privileges, then to achieve this aim, it is necessary to organise the only class that is capable of achieving this kind of revolution — the working class of both Black and White nations in a struggle to achieve socialist solutions. It is impossible to abolish national oppression under capitalism, said Lenin, since this requires the abolition of classes, i.e. the introduction of socialism. He argued:

“By transforming capitalism into socialism the proletariat creates the possibility of abolishing national oppression; the possibility becomes reality ‘only’ — ‘only!’ — with the establishment of full democracy in all spheres, including the delineation of the state frontiers in accordance with the ‘sympathies’ of the population ... And this, in turn, will serve as a basis for developing the practical elimination of even the slightest national friction and the least national mistrust, for an accelerated drawing together and fusion of nations...” (*The Socialist Revolution and the Right of Nations to Self-determination.*)

As our people, led by the working class, will liberate themselves from apartheid oppression they will gravitate irresistibly towards integration with their white countrymen, a process at present, though slowly, taking place now under the aegis of the African National Congress, the leader of this revolution. The degree of the smoothness of this process will depend largely on the class at the head of the revolution, and whether or not the former oppressors infringe the oppressed nation’s feeling of self-respect. The Party of the working class, indicated Lenin, strives to draw nations closer together, and bring about their further fusion; but it desires to achieve this aim not by violence, but exclusively through a free fraternal unity of the workers and the working people of the nations.

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Every intelligent worker, whether of European or African descent, must associate himself with the demands of the SA Native National Congress, representing for this purpose, we think, the subject races of the Union in general, for equal rights with the other races, right to ownership of land, equality in the eyes of the law, 'equal rights for all civilised men', equality of treatment and citizenship irrespective of race, class, creed or origin, equal share in the direction of public affairs, and direct representation by members of their own race in all legislative bodies ... On their side also is the historic fact that national liberation is, in the case of subject races, the necessary introduction to proletarian revolution.

Editorial in *The International*, June 1, 1923

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# **AFRICA NOTES** **AND COMMENT**

**By Du Bois**

## **NIGERIA — The Army takes over, again**

On December 31, 1983 the soldiers moved in once more to take over the reins of political power in Nigeria. This was the 5th military coup in the country's stormy history since independence in October 1960.

In January 1966, General Ironsi seized power from Nigeria's first post-independence civilian government. The coup was attributed to widespread electoral rigging, the breakdown of the civil administration, especially in the western province, and rising hostility between the Hausa-Fulani, Yoruba and Ibo nationalities — the country's largest national groups.

Seven months later, in July 1966, the Ironsi government was overturned by a second military coup which brought into power General Gowon. Ironsi and many of the Ibo officers supporting his coup were killed, and this further fanned the flames of ethnic tension. A year later, the Nigerian civil war broke out, as the eastern province, the majority of whose people are Ibo, attempted to secede and form the independent state of Biafra under the leadership of Colonel Ojukwu. The civil war lasted for nearly three years until the eastern forces were defeated. Nigeria remained under military rule with General Gowon as head of State.



In July 1975, Gowon's government was overthrown in yet another army coup led by General Murtala Mohammed. As with previous coups, and later ones, the reasons advanced were widespread corruption within the state, economic mismanagement and civil maladministration. This latter coup, however, was only of short duration. In February, 1976 the army once more acted against its own officers. Murtala Mohammed was assassinated and the army brought into power General Olusegun Obasanjo.

In October 1979, Nigeria returned to a civilian ruled government with the Nigerian National Party under the leadership of Shehu Shagari winning the general election. President Shagari was returned to power for a second term in the August 1983 elections, despite widespread, and in some cases substantiated, allegations of election rigging and fraud.

Even as the dust was beginning to settle around the results of the latest election the army, led by Major-General Mohammed Buhari, moved decisively against the Shagari government, suspended the constitution, and banned all political parties. The soldiers were once more in power. The first nation-wide broadcast by the military gave the reasons for the coup in the following terms:

"Fellow countrymen and women, you are all living witnesses to the grave economic predicament and uncertainty which an inept and corrupt leadership has imposed on our beloved nation for the last four years.

"Our economy has been hopelessly mismanaged. We have become a debtor and beggar nation. There is inadequacy of food at reasonable prices. Health services are in shambles and our hospitals are reduced to mere consulting clinics without drugs, water or equipment."

There is much evidence to underline the seriousness of the economic crisis alluded to in the brief abstract cited above. Nigeria's external debt stood at some 15 billion dollars in loan repayments alone by the time the coup took place, with the treasury almost empty. At the same time, the country's oil revenue, which accounts for some 80-90% of all state revenue, has been spiralling downwards over the last four years — from 23.4 billion in 1980, 16.7 billion in 1981, 13.1 billion in 1982, to 11 billion dollars in 1983.

The consequences of this dramatic drop in revenue have been disastrous, not only to the Nigerian economy, but to the whole socio-economic edifice. Successive Nigerian governments, military and civilian alike, have maintained an import oriented and import dependent economy since independence. No attempt has been made to diversify the economy to safeguard the country against fluctuations in the price of its major export commodity. The resultant continued importation of consumer goods, raw materials and manufactured goods meant larger and larger loans to pay for

imports. In turn, this inevitably led to soaring prices with the burden falling squarely on the mass of Nigerian people. The price of basic food items, even those locally produced with imported raw materials — bread, milk, rice, meat and fish — rose to staggering levels, beyond the pockets of the masses. Food scarcity was leading to hoarding by traders for greater profits. The black market flourished. Inflation rose to over 40%.

When a capitalist economy goes into crisis it is the workers and toiling masses in general who suffer the consequences. Over 100,000 workers lost their jobs or faced the prospect of dismissal and retrenchment in the construction, small manufacturing, textile, and even petroleum production industries. Workers in the civil administration went without pay for months. Hospitals and social services suffered from lack of funds, equipment and resources. Employment prospects for the youth appear dismal, and it is estimated that some 34,000 graduates now finishing their voluntary national service will be unable to find the jobs for which they were trained.

How is it that Africa's most populous country, certainly not one of the poorest on the continent, has got itself into such a mess over such a long period of time since independence?

To be sure, the Nigerian state has been afflicted by corruption, during both civil and military rule in the past. The state has served as both a source and the instrument of enrichment of a small class of Nigerians.

Yet this is not the whole picture. The problem with Nigeria, as with many African states, is that political independence from colonial rule was not followed by economic independence. Nigeria has remained a dependent capitalist country with some of the worst features of such dependency. A country with substantial oil reserves and revenue has failed to diversify the economy to meet the demands of the people in general. Rather, successive governments relied on oil export revenues to maintain its dependence on imports. Such a state of affairs spawned a class of merchants, traders, financiers and capitalists who fed off the import and distribution of goods as the main source of accumulation of personal riches and wealth.

The more the country relied on imports and the more and longer it imported goods to satisfy national needs, the more secure and richer this group of comprador capitalists, merchants and middlemen became. It is this class, with its imported limousines and Mercedes Benzes, fat bank balances, palatial homes and high life-styles which forms a stark contrast to the mass of Nigerian citizens who have to bear the brunt of any 'austerity' measures introduced by the state in times of difficulty for the economy.

In a country dependent on a single commodity we would expect that control of its various aspects would be firmly in the hands of the state. Yet oil exploration, development, refining, processing and marketing have only been partially controlled by successive Nigerian governments. The result has been that the multinational oil majors have been allocated substantial interests in the various aspects of the oil economy and have continued to reap vast profits from such concessions. More to the point, the petrochemical industry, a logical and necessary offshoot of an oil-based economy, is substantially, and in some aspects, wholly controlled by the oil majors. State control will mean public ownership and accountability. Imports of necessary petrochemical products ensure profits for the middlemen.

Nigeria's present government will need more than guns and a determination to eliminate corruption and pay off the country's huge debts if it is to solve Nigeria's chronic socio-economic problems. Dependent capitalism has proved to be disastrous for the country and the mass of the people.

For those of us, especially in southern Africa, who have been strengthened by the all-round support that Nigeria has rendered to the liberation struggles in South Africa, Namibia and the frontline states against the Pretoria regime, the spectacle of a Nigeria that has become "a debtor and beggar nation" is not encouraging at all. A truly independent and strong Nigeria is what the liberation process on our continent demands.

The way forward has already been taken by a number of African governments. It is through *socialism*.

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## **LIBERIA — Reaction bites deeper**

When Master-Sergeant Samuel Kenyan Doe captured state power through a military coup in April 1980, the Liberian people could have been forgiven for hoping that Liberia had entered a new era of social justice and equality, and that their material and spiritual interests as a people would be catered for. Hitherto, Liberia's natural resources (mainly rubber and iron ore) had become the virtual property of transnational corporations such as the Firestone Rubber Company. The "open door" policy followed by the Tubman and Tolbert regimes allowed foreign companies unrestricted access and exploitation of Liberian agricultural, mining and other resources.



This naturally meant unrestricted profits. It also meant a Liberia politically tied to the governments of the exploiters. In return, a handful of Liberians, the elite ruling on behalf of imperialist interests, grew rich from the payoff they received, whilst the mass of the Liberian people and workers continued to live out their lives "on the brink of starvation". So ardent was the True Whig Party in fulfilling imperialism's project that local Liberian business, other than that controlled by the ruling elite, was systematically starved of opportunities and funds.

By the time of the coup the army of the discontented included not only soldiers, but shopkeepers and businessmen driven to desperation. More significantly, it included a mass movement of resistance which had grown up and included in its ranks workers and unemployed, youth and students the radical intelligentsia and sections of the civil administration.

It was under these conditions that the soldiers took over. If the mass of the Liberian people and progressives looked on the army as a radicalising instrument for their salvation, others, hardly concerned with the welfare of Liberians, looked on the army as a means of maintaining imperialism's grip on the country. The Reagan administration moved swiftly, especially when the People's Redemption Council (PRC) co-opted a number of the leading opponents of the Tolbert regime considered by the United States to be socialists and communists. The reference was to men like Dr Togba-Nah Tipoteh, Dr Boima Fahnbulleh and Baccus Mathews who had been active in the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA) and the Progressive People's Party (PPP), which had organised the urban poor, workers, workless, youth and students against the excesses of the Tolbert dynasty.

The U.S. State Department was equally concerned for the strategic importance of Liberia to imperialism. Liberia was the central transmitting station for the reactionary Voice of America broadcasting to the entire Middle East, Soviet Union and Africa. This apart, Liberia served as a junction for telecommunications which linked Washington to its various African diplomatic centres. Liberia was also part of the satellite system controlled by the United States.

The reasons for massive US intervention were clear, and it was not long after his visit to Liberia that Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, was able to reassure the Reagan administration that Liberia was now safe from subversion. In the event, the US led the massive aid package to the Liberian economy. A 33 million dollar economic and military aid package was worked out directly from the US treasury; the IMF offered a two-year loan of 85 million dollars, and the World Bank offered another 3.2 million dollars.

Liberia was saved from communist subversion. In the four years since then, the original cause of the coup — the deteriorating social, economic and political life of the mass of the people — has hardly changed. On the contrary, things have gone from bad to worse.

The progressives within the PRC have been gradually forced out of leading positions, forced to resign or, as happened with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Dr Fahnbulleh, dismissed on the grounds that they espoused “non-Liberian ideas”, or held ideological views “incompatible with the aims of the Liberian revolution”.

After his return from the United States in September 1983, Samuel Doe (now *General* S.K. Doe) expressed great concern about left-wing teachers and students who were trying to indoctrinate Liberia’s youth with Marxist and socialist ideas. He promptly banned socialist teaching and “ideas alien to the Liberian way of life” from all educational institutions. Exactly what these ideas are have never been spelled out by the Doe regime, but we can get a hint of the real cause of political repression from Dr Fahnbulleh when he writes:

“The struggle is simply between those who want to grow rich at the expense of the people on the one hand and the down-trodden multitude who live on the brink of starvation on the other... it is a struggle between those who believe in the dishonest amassing of wealth and those who believe that wealth created by the people ought to be shared by the people... we believe that the rich constructed the world for their comfort and that the poor must reconstruct it for their own convenience.”

If these ideas are really “alien to the Liberian way of life”, then surely it is high time that “the Liberian way of life” was changed, rather than the ideas.

In the meantime Liberia has become a full client-state of US imperialism. Chester Crocker, whilst informing participants at an investment conference in Washington that total private investment in Liberia was estimated at about 430 million dollars, reminded them that “Liberia is indeed one country where a pro-business attitude is the norm”. The point was reinforced by the Foreign Minister later when he stated that “... Liberia possesses incalculable potential for becoming a model nation for private enterprise in Africa.”

The main aim of political repression in Liberia has been to make the country safe for imperialist exploitation.

And the Doe regime has gone even further in tying the country’s fortunes to imperialism. The regime has lashed out against the socialist-oriented African states and has launched into a political-diplomatic offensive against the Ghana government of the PNDC, recently expelling the Ghana ambassador for allegedly being involved, together with the Soviet Union, in a counter-coup. What has enraged Africans, no less than patriotic Liberians,

has been the re-establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel, against the express decision of the OAU.

What of the recent counter-coup attempt? Many commentators believe this to have been exaggerated out of all proportion. Discontent within the army has been simmering for some time. In November, Doe dramatically announced that a plot had been uncovered involving foreign powers — Ghana and the Soviet Union. A dismissed general was named as the leading figure. Yet no evidence, except the confession of a single army “plotter”, has been produced. Could it be that the Doe regime is using this as a pretext to stall the return to civilian rule promised for 1985? The United States certainly would not want to give up a sure ally for some uncertain future civilian government.

Only the organised force of the people can be mobilised against the reaction now rampant in Liberia. It is time that the interests of the “down-trodden multitudes” prevailed in Liberia.

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## **MADAGASCAR — “Vindicate the People’s Choice with Deeds”.<sup>(1)</sup>**

The 10th Congress of the Independence Congress Party of Madagascar (AKFM-KDRSM) was an occasion not only to celebrate the 25th anniversary of Madagascar’s oldest political party, but also to make a penetrating analysis of the problems and perspectives of the revolution of 1975 which overthrew the old order and brought into power an alliance of left forces committed to a socialist-oriented policy.

Although the analysis is specific to Madagascar, there are nonetheless aspects which apply more or less universally to all countries whose governments and people have rejected capitalism, adopted firm anti-imperialist positions, and have moved in the direction of consolidating people’s power through socialist-oriented policies.

One such major problem is “the negative impact of the economic crisis in industrial capitalist countries” on developing countries in general, and socialist-oriented formations in particular. The effect of this is to introduce inflationary price rises in the economy of these countries without a

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(1) This section of AFRICA NOTES has been adapted from an article with the above title by Gisele Rabesahala, General Secretary of AKFM-KDRSM and Minister of Culture and Arts.



compensating rise in the price of export goods. The result is a rise in the price of all imported and even locally produced goods, worsened conditions of trade, rising foreign debts, and absence or shortage of both productive and consumer goods. The burden of these difficulties has to be borne by the mass of the working people, which accounts for the existence of “discontent, concern and uneasiness among the masses”. Reaction exploits such difficulties to turn the people against the revolution. The economy, therefore, “is an important instrument which imperialism and reaction use for fomenting anti-socialist sentiments among the masses.”

The strategic objective of popular revolutions is to consolidate and expand social, political and economic change in favour of the toiling masses. It is precisely this which holds forth prospects for further revolutionary gains. At the same time, these objectives are often difficult to achieve. In Madagascar such an advance has to take place in conditions which present serious obstacles.

In the countryside, shortages of “competent personnel, credits and technical facilities” have led to under-utilisation of arable land. The result has been a chronic under-production of rice, a basic food, and difficulties in the formation of peasant co-operatives and increasing production. The migration of peasants to towns causes pressure on the urban economy because of the lack of jobs and housing. The discontented fall easy prey to anti-government propaganda and become the potential social base of reaction.

In the urban areas, Madagascar has been experiencing a lack of jobs commensurate with the economically active population. The scarcity of foreign exchange creates difficulties for the normal operation of the economy, let alone its expansion.

To compound the economic problems many managers of state enterprises, “intended to operate as the main levers of economic development in a country which has opted for socialism”, lack “adequate ideological grounding and are petty-bourgeois in outlook”. The results are chronically unprofitable enterprises, increased government subsidies, and a management which retains “unwarrantedly high incomes”. At the same time, workers have been denied any role in the management of enterprises leading to worker and trade union apathy in improving production. This is a serious obstacle to raising the level of their political consciousness.

In the battle for the hearts and minds of the people for a socialist choice the AKFM Congress came to the conclusion that the education of the people, young and old, left much to be desired. Many educationists held and

propagated views which were at variance with those proclaimed by the revolution. "Socialist principles are treated as being opposed to specifically 'Malagasy ideas' and nationalism is fostered to the detriment of socialism. Values which the Charter describes as assets of real socialist democracy are rejected while bourgeois democracy of the colonial period is extolled."

The information sphere manifests a similar trend by the mass media, and the information services "tend to demobilise the masses instead of inducing them to commit themselves more." The last Congress of the AKFM resolved to increase the content and scope of the Party's ideological training of cadres, increase its publications and establish a Party school "to improve the political, ideological and overall education of the party cadre at all levels".

One of the serious problems which the Malagasy revolution is experiencing, and which surfaced during the August 1983 elections, is the political fissure which has appeared within the United Front of left forces. This alliance — the National Front for the Defence of the Revolution (FNDR) — was formed in 1975 and constituted the organisational framework for advance to socialism. According to the AKFM analysis some of the member parties within the FNDR advanced programmes which deviated from the agreed programme of the revolution and engaged in anti-AKFM activities. One party, MONIMA, even nominated its own presidential candidate.

The result of the elections was a decisive victory for President Ratsiraka whom the AKFM supported. Nonetheless, the activities of some of the alliance parties made the question of the future of the alliance and its programme an imperative for discussion and resolution.

Problems of advance to socialism are many and complex but the AKFM, a party rooted in the principles of "proletarian internationalism evolved by the great Marx", is confident that "the people's socialist choice can and must be maintained, defended and put into practice. To vindicate it with deeds is the chief task of all who really seek a new and just society in Madagascar."

## The Role of the Masses in our Liberation Struggle

# THE QUESTION OF AN UPRISING OF THE WHOLE PEOPLE

By Hugh Trevor

Of especial interest amongst the contributions to *The African Communist* in recent years have been those which raise key questions concerning the strategy and tactics of our liberation struggle. Contributions on this topic reflect a certain measure of uncertainty concerning the liberation movement's strategic and tactical programme and a desire to clarify the precise path ahead. The contributions are especially to be seen in connection with the upsurge over the past years of the mass struggle; for this upsurge poses with more urgency than, for instance, in the early 70's the question of the strategic aim of the liberation struggle in its present phase.

### **The role of the youth**

Particularly thought-provoking have been the contributions of Mzala and Migwe<sup>(1)</sup>. Such articles indicate that the youth in our liberation movement has an important part to play in clarifying the tactics of our struggle.

They have helped to make us sit up and think again. Indeed, that is what we can expect from the members of our "Soweto generation"; for they experienced an important episode of mass struggle in the period 1976-77, a period which, as the Central Committee of our party has noted, "opened a new chapter in the history of the revolutionary struggle" in South Africa<sup>(2)</sup>. Moreover, if we look at the history of our national liberation movement over



past decades, we see that — at important turning-points of the struggle — the young people have an important part in urging into the centre of the movement's strategic and tactical considerations the question of the role of the masses. So it was in the 1920's at the time of the ICU and the 1940's in the days of the ANC Youth League. Again, at the time of the ANC's Morogoro conference in 1969 the youth was once more in the forefront.

### **Lenin and the role of the masses**

It seems to me that, in general, our liberation movement has not paid sufficient attention to Lenin's work especially in relation to the democratic revolution in Russia. True, the colonial and racist form of oppression of the black people in our country means that we face, in part, different conditions. There are many factors, both subjective and objective, which have placed severe constraints on the ideological and practical development of the liberation movement. On the other hand, because of the more advanced capitalist relations in our country the masses are more politically active than has been the case with many of the other countries which fought classical colonialism. This, indeed, has served as the socio-political base for the emergence and sustained growth of a Communist Party in our country — over a period of more than 6 decades. Moreover, the existence of such a party, in its turn, acts as a subjective factor, further advancing the political consciousness of the masses. It is the same socio-political base which has been the most fundamental factor in the step-by-step radicalisation of the African National Congress and its development in the direction of a revolutionary-democratic party.

Another key "special condition" in South Africa (as compared to the classical colonial situation) is the growth of an imperialist state on South African soil, serving the interest, in the first place, of the domestic and foreign monopolies, an imperialist state which administers and secures the racist-colonialist system. This makes it necessary for the liberation movement to overthrow this state and for the people to create a new democratic state which will break up the racist and colonialist relations. In order to carry through this extremely complicated and difficult task, the maximum mobilisation of the masses is necessary, above all, the workers and peasants who are not only strategically placed within the system but who make up the vast majority of the people. Lenin devoted detailed attention to the question of the role of the masses with respect to the strategic objective of overthrowing the bourgeois state and creating a new people's state. Above all, Lenin serves as a corrective to narrow nationalist or petit-bourgeois radical tendencies which do not pay sufficient (active) attention to mass struggle.

Lenin had great respect for, and trust in, the masses. In particular, he held that a revolution can only be made by the masses and not by any politically conscious minority. The masses are moved by deep economic needs. (In this sense, every “real revolution” is an economic or social revolution.) Economic interests “impel the masses of downtrodden, cowed, ignorant people to wage a great and unprecedentedly selfless struggle.”<sup>(3)</sup> At times of revolution “the people are capable of performing miracles”<sup>(4)</sup>.

Lenin watched closely, too, the forms or methods of struggle emerging from the masses themselves. These forms of struggle he understood as emerging spontaneously as a result of historical necessity, as being determined by the actual conditions of struggle. He said on one occasion:

“... Marxism *learns*, if we may so express it, from mass practice, and makes no claim whatever to *teach* the masses forms of struggle invented by ‘systematisers’ in the seclusion of their studies.”<sup>(5)</sup>

At the same time, as is to be expected from the great theoretician and organiser of the “party of a special type” (the independent party of the working class), Lenin by no means underestimated the subjective factor, i.e. the organising activity of revolutionaries. Their task was to instil more consciousness and organisation into mass activity, to increase the self-confidence of the mass of the people, to rouse their initiative and increase their offensive and striking capacity and to show them the shortest and most direct road to victory.

### **Our movement and the question of the conquering of power**

The strategic objective of the present phase of the liberation struggle is the conquering of power by the mass of the people in order to do away with colonialism and racism. Our party had already incorporated into its programme, drawn up in 1962, the concept of a seizure of state power, the smashing of the old state and the creation of a new state:

“The Party declares that the revolutionary people of South Africa cannot merely take over existing State and government institutions designed to maintain colonialism, but must destroy them and create new people’s institutions in their place.”<sup>(6)</sup>

It was in this context that the party put forward detailed proposals for the building of a new “national democratic” state which would serve as a “vigorous and vigilant dictatorship” against the former dominating and exploiting classes<sup>(7)</sup>. Extremely significant is that the party did not consider that this was strictly a communist policy but that it was a policy which could serve as a platform for all revolutionary democrats. Thus it directed its proposals not only towards communists but as a basis for discussion “for all

democratic and patriotic people, and in particular for members and supporters of the national liberation and trade union movements.”<sup>(8)</sup> In the opinion of the party, the destruction of the state of the monopolies would serve the interest of all genuine African and other black patriots and democrats, the workers, peasants and middle strata, and even, in the long-term, despite their position as part of the privileged white group, that of the white workers and middle strata<sup>(9)</sup>.

In the aftermath of the launching of guerrilla warfare by the combined ZAPU-ANC guerrilla units in 1967, our party returned once again to the question of the strategic objective of South Africa’s liberation struggle. The Central Committee was clearly concerned that the liberation movement had begun to place too much emphasis on a strategy of protracted guerrilla warfare to the detriment of the mass political struggle which had, in the course of the past decades, come to the centre on a broad national front. In a statement during 1968<sup>(10)</sup> it warned that, though the South African liberation struggle involves a struggle for national liberation and this meant that the South African struggle “has much in common, important similarities and analogies, with those in the rest of Africa and elsewhere”, nevertheless “those analogies and similarities cannot be pressed too far without incurring serious mistakes. We have to contend with colonialism in South Africa, but as our Programme reminds us, it is colonialism ‘of a special type’”. The statement went on to note that the national liberation struggle in South Africa takes place not in a backward but in a developed capitalist country.

“The enemy is not a metropolitan power thousands of miles away. It is essentially (its close ties with Western imperialism notwithstanding) the South African monopoly capitalist class, based within the country itself, in control of a powerful state apparatus and backed by a modern industrial economy.”<sup>(11)</sup>

It was in the context of its understanding of the nature of the South African system that the CC made a distinction between the goal, on the one hand, of the more typical national liberation struggles and, on the other, of the South African struggle:

“The task and aim of the national movements in ‘normal’ colonial countries was to get the imperialists *out* of the country. It was not and could not have been the defeat and conquest of the imperialist power itself.”

The CC noted that in the ‘normal’ colonial countries it had been possible to reach compromises at varying stages of the struggle: “the more or less gradual and piecemeal transference of political power to the hands of indigenous leaders (whether really representative or not); the withdrawal of the imperialists to their home territories.”



In the South African situation, on the other hand, liberation “cannot be accomplished without *the actual defeat and destruction of South African imperialism itself; the overthrow of the present state.*” (my emphasis)

At its conference in Morogoro in 1969 the ANC officially incorporated into its programme the need for the revolutionary forces to seize state power. This was contained, in its clearest form, in a document which restated and in some respects elaborated the Congress movement’s famous Freedom Charter of 1955<sup>(12)</sup>.

### **The Communist Party and “people’s power”**

Increasingly in the course of the 1970’s our party began to stress the great importance of the (black) workers and peasants in the liberation struggle and, in this context, began to use the term “people’s power” in connection with the strategic objective of the present phase of our struggle though it emphasised that the aim was still a “national democratic” revolution whose main contingent would be the African people. Undoubtedly this involved a certain shift in the party’s understanding of the character of the South African revolution in the direction of a ‘people’s revolution’ though, in the party’s view, it would not thereby lose its character as a national liberation revolution.

The shift in the party’s approach — it was really more a shift of emphasis than anything else — occurred in connection with certain changes within the framework of the racist-colonialist system in South Africa, according to which the ruling class was encouraging a certain limited broadening of the middle strata amongst the African (and other black) people, some of whom were being co-opted as appendages of the system. This neo-colonialist-type policy which had its roots already in the late 1950’s with the introduction of the Bantustan policy, increased, according to our party’s Central Committee, the danger of the penetration of the liberation movement by bourgeois nationalism. In this connection, in a statement, “Defeat Vorster and his Collaborators”, which appeared in *The African Communist* in early 1976, the CC pointed out that “sections of the emerging black middle class are antagonistic to the more radical aims of our liberation movement which has increasingly recognised the fundamental links between national and social emancipation in South Africa”. While stressing the need for the liberation movement to continue to consolidate the broadest possible alliance which would include the middle strata whose fundamental interests still lay with the liberation movement, it called especially for organisation amongst the workers, the peasants and the youth. Indeed, it noted that the heightening of the confrontation with the racist state would help to mobilise

the broadest sections of the black majority, including sections of the middle strata since vacillating middle strata tend to go on to the side of the strong.<sup>(13)</sup>

· Correctly used, the strategic objective of people's power involves making more precise the concept of conquest of state power, for it implies the emergence of revolutionary organs of people's power in the course of a revolutionary upheaval. Such organs emerge, indeed, as an inevitable and necessary aspect of mass insurrection. The concept of people's power — in South African conditions — thus implies the necessity for mass insurrection which is, in any case, a necessary tactical assumption from the strategic objective of conquest of state power<sup>(14)</sup>.

### **The need for an uprising of the whole people**

The need to conquer state power — a policy accepted by both our party and the ANC — presupposes the maximum mobilisation of the South African people <sup>(15)</sup> and, above all, the sharpening of their *offensive* capacity. It presupposes a mass uprising, an *armed insurrection*, which is *clearly the most offensive form of mass struggle*. This connection between the need to conquer state power and the necessity for a mass uprising is especially clear in South African conditions where, unlike in the more typical colonial situations, an elaborate and formidable state apparatus actually exists on South African soil and where, in order to liquidate the racist-colonialist system, the present ruling class of monopolists and landlords has to be expropriated — a policy of the South African liberation movement since the days of the Freedom Charter which was reaffirmed at the ANC's Morogoro conference. Indeed, it is in the context of the liberation movement's policy of expropriation that the necessity of a democratic dictatorship in order to defend the people's gains against the inevitable onslaught of the former ruling class becomes particularly clear. The need for a mass insurrection was explicitly stated in a recent party statement<sup>(16)</sup> and the programme of the party sees the struggle developing as follows:

“....patriots and democrats will take up arms to defend themselves, organise guerrilla armies and undertake various acts of armed resistance, culminating in a mass insurrection against white domination”.<sup>(17)</sup>

“Operation Mayibuye”, the draft document drawn up by the MK High Command soon after the formation of Umkhonto and which formed the basis of the state case against the accused in the Rivonia trial, similarly conceived of the guerrilla struggle culminating in a ‘general uprising’.<sup>(18)</sup>

In their articles Mzala and Migwe have raised the question of armed insurrection in more explicit form than has been done — at an official level

of the liberation movement — in recent times. Obviously influenced by the “Soweto” events of 1976-77 and the sporadic violent confrontations thereafter between the people and the forces of the apartheid state, they envisage the struggle culminating in mass armed insurrection. In this connection, they also see the importance of partial or rudimentary uprisings of the people. Mzala notes in one of his articles in *The African Communist* that the “potential units of the revolutionary army (still armed with sticks and stones inside the country) are springing up out of the demonstrations. It is our task now to give the utmost support to the people’s combat efforts; to organise that which is spontaneous...” And he makes the important remark: “A vanguard movement organises the spontaneous actions of the masses, but cannot make a revolution for them with its own forces alone.” In an article which appeared in *Dawn*, the monthly journal of Umkhonto we Sizwe, clearly influenced by the practical organisers and theoreticians of the armed struggle of the heroic Vietnamese people who resisted the narrow and defensive Maoist conception of “protracted people’s war” (guerrilla war, based in the countryside, as more or less the exclusive form of struggle)<sup>(19)</sup>, he stresses the need for “mass uprisings combined with revolutionary warfare in close co-ordination.”<sup>(20)</sup> However, though such statements indicate a correct assessment that a revolutionary organisation must pay great attention to the forms of struggle actually emerging from the masses, they do not express consistently what mass insurrection means.

### **What does armed insurrection entail?**

*Insurrection must of necessity, indeed by definition, involve the mass of the people and this means, above all, the workers and peasants.* Failure to grasp this central truth means that the concept of “arming the masses” which, in the understanding of Marxist-Leninists, is organically connected with the concept of insurrection, tends to become identified simply with the use of arms by wider sections of the people than the (more-or-less) professional people’s army. For Mzala and Migwe, “arming of the masses” becomes identified with such activities as the setting up of combat groups, fighting squads, amongst, for instance, the workers and students. This conception of “arming the masses” thus has a somewhat narrow military-technical tendency. To the extent that this conception does have any connection with armed insurrection, it involves, of course, essentially *guerrilla* activities which can and are likely to play an extremely important part in the build-up to insurrection.<sup>(21)</sup> However, we cannot fail to note that, even at the level of preparations for insurrection, this approach is quite inadequate since it fails to grasp



the crucial importance of working-class actions, above all, strikes, as well as peasant action in the preparations for an uprising.

The working class is the only class which can lead the struggle for power. This is because of its position in the social structure, its role in production as a disciplined organised force, present at strategic points (especially economic) in the society. Moreover, based on its objective conditions of existence, it is potentially a consistent revolutionary class for it has nothing to lose but its chains. Preparation of the working class for this role demands its education, above all, in actual struggle. It means combining economic and political demands in the context of working-class action. It means strike action on both the industrial and political fronts. *Without large-scale strikes there can be no build-up to insurrection.* Apart from anything else, large-scale strikes play an indispensable role in arousing other sectors of the population, including the peasantry. Undoubtedly, such strikes will not come about simply through intervention on the part of the liberation movement — certainly not simply by calls for the workers to “stay at home”. *A strike upsurge is likely to have a strong spontaneous element, connected with the further sharpening of the crisis of the South African system and emerging essentially out of industrial strikes.* Nonetheless, there are many ways in which the liberation and trade union movement can prepare the way for this strike upsurge, including hard work at the industrial level where political issues must be constantly raised. It is in the context of the preparations for a mass uprising that the tremendous importance of trade union work is to be assessed and we must concentrate an important part of the capacity of the liberation movement on this front. Trade union work is not the stepchild of national liberation work; it is an integral and crucial part of such work.

As far as the peasantry is concerned, it should be clear that there can be no nationwide insurrection in South Africa without a peasant insurrection. By peasant insurrection we mean, not simply the peasantry taking up arms. An integral part of a peasant uprising is that the peasants themselves begin to take over the land, confiscating it from the absentee landlords, the land companies, the state, speculators and other parasites of various types (including those farmers who use prison labour). The ANC’s conception of confiscation of the land lays the foundation for such action.<sup>(22)</sup>

### **Revolutionary organs of self-government**

Both Mzala and Migwe touch on the question of the emergence of forms of people’s power through, for instance, the exclusion of government agents in certain areas of our country, but their conception is of a somewhat defensive

kind. In their view the organs will emerge at weak points in the enemy's structure. Although such a development seems almost inevitable in such areas as the townships and indeed in the Bantustans, it should be clear that, however important such a development will be, it will be one taking place essentially, not within the framework of insurrection, but, at least in the initial stages, will rather be a part of guerrilla-type struggle. (The "Soweto" events have already pointed the way here.) The liberation movement cannot fail to note that concentration of actions of this type will serve to keep the movement essentially on the defensive. The government forces will be able to contain such a struggle within the township. Moreover, this type of struggle can clearly play into the hands of bourgeois nationalists and entrepreneurial elements of various types with narrow egoistic petit-bourgeois ambitions. A certain strengthening of tribal chauvinism within the Bantustans and, indeed, in the townships, many of which house people from only one ethnic group or are divided on ethnic lines, will also be a problem should the movement concentrate on struggle at this level. The danger of this type of regional rather than class-based organisation, indeed, emerged already in the days of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union, the organisational structure of which became largely based on the townships. Struggles within the townships and Bantustans must be linked to wide-scale struggle in the urban areas (at the centre of these areas) and in the "white farming" areas, i.e. at the level of offensive working-class and peasant struggle. It is in the course of working-class and peasant uprisings that revolutionary organs of people's power of a truly insurrectionary nature will emerge.

It is in relation to the emergence of such organs of revolutionary power that we can understand that *conquest of state power is not carried out by a politically-conscious minority — nor by an army — but by the masses themselves* — something, indeed, stressed in the Strategy and Tactics document of the ANC's Morogoro conference. It is the masses who begin to create the structure of the new democratic state in the course of the insurrection.

### **The lessons of the Soweto revolt**

It is in the context of such an understanding of the nature of mass insurrection that we should look at the "Soweto" revolt. Quite clearly, the events of 1976-77, although they had certain elements of an uprising, did not, as the party pointed out at the time, break out of the limits of a "youth revolt."<sup>(23)</sup> The most important aspect to consider is the class character of the "uprising". It was dominated by the African high-school youth (true,

extremely closely connected — often at familial level — with the working class and young unemployed) whose ambitions were frustrated by the apartheid system and, more immediately, by the system of Bantu education. The workers did, of course, take part in “stay-at-homes” in the course of the revolt but these were essentially solidarity actions rather than offensive actions initiated by the working class. It is to be noted, *inter alia*, that the question of the seizure of state power played no role. The revolt was an expression of a feeling amongst leading elements of the African (and Coloured) youth that meaningful reforms within the system cannot be expected and that the path of armed struggle is a necessary one. Hundreds of young people crossed the South African border and joined Umkhonto we Sizwe. This “defection” into the liberation camp of potential leading elements of the urban middle strata whom the ruling class had increasingly been making efforts to win to its side was a tremendous blow to imperialism and has been an important element in the further destabilisation of the regime.

At the same time, the complete disillusionment of these young people with the possibilities for a reform of the system certainly has not, in itself, created a *revolutionary situation*. It is the task of revolutionaries to raise the struggle to a qualitatively higher level so that our people are in a position to directly challenge the racist-colonialist system. The youth must merge their struggle with others and help to unite the people. They must help in the organisation of the workers and peasants so as to eventually unite them in a *nation-wide* uprising to overthrow the hated apartheid regime.

### **The role of Umkhonto**

An armed uprising of the people cannot be successful in the absence of decisive action by a professional people’s army (professional in the sense that its cadres are full-time and trained in the use of modern weapons and in military technique). As Lenin pointed out, for an insurrection three streams of insurrection are necessary — workers’, peasants’, and military — and these must be merged into a single victorious insurrection<sup>(24)</sup>. The important advances made by Umkhonto we Sizwe since “Soweto” are, therefore, of great significance. At the same time, intensified political organisation specifically of the workers and peasants will be needed to aid the development of Umkhonto as a genuine people’s army.

We have reached a decisive point of our struggle. Either we go forward with determination to organise the mass of the people, to arouse their initiative and revolutionary energy, to *prepare to go on the offensive*, or we plot along,



maintaining the liberation movement in a sort of “equilibrium” with the imperialist system in South Africa — interrupted by a few “armed blows” and mass demonstrations. In connection with the present phase of the struggle, we should remember Lenin’s words:

“... in the time of revolution it is not enough to ascertain the ‘will of the majority’ — you must *prove to be stronger* at the decisive moment and the decisive place; you must *win...*”<sup>(25)</sup>

For us Communists it should be clear that the extent to which we organise the masses of our people in the democratic revolution will make the later transition to socialism, our supreme goal, that much easier and smoother. As Lenin stressed, the task of Communists is to make the sweep, scale and scope of the democratic revolution as powerful as possible.<sup>(26)</sup> The Marxist, he said,

“is ... the *first* to take the path of direct revolutionary struggle, marching straight to battle and exposing the illusions of conciliation cherished by all kinds of social and political vacillators... the Marxist is the *last* to leave the path of direct revolutionary struggle, he leaves it only when all possibilities have been exhausted, when there is not a *shadow* of hope for a shorter way, when the basis for an appeal to prepare for mass strikes, an uprising, etc., is obviously disappearing ...”<sup>(27)</sup>

The stage has not been reached when the liberation movement can call for an immediate insurrection. For one, there is no widespread revolutionary mass upsurge on which the insurrection can be based<sup>(28)</sup>. Moreover, from the military point of view we are clearly still relatively weak. What is necessary is the adoption of a clear programme by the liberation movement for *the education of the masses for their supreme task of the conquering of state power*.

### **The question of a “peaceful solution”**

In conclusion, we should not forget the constant danger that the imperialists pose for our revolutionary strategy. It is precisely at the point when it appears that the mass of the people are poised for important gains that the imperialists come forward with all sorts of political “solutions”, even “one-man-one-vote” or “African majority rule”. This is certainly one of the possible lines of imperialist strategy and has, indeed, been receiving increasing attention in recent times from imperialist circles, particularly in the United States. The imperialists know, of course, that they cannot hold the fort indefinitely against the majority of the people of South Africa, especially in the context of the growing crisis of the country’s political and economic system. We must beware of enemy offers of “talks” with the aim of demobilising the masses. The divisions caused by Botha’s constitution are an example of the dangers inherent in offers of “compromise”.

## NOTES

- 1) See *African Communist (AC)* 3rd Quarter 1980, p.65-73; *AC* 3rd Quarter 1981, p.83-94; *AC* 2nd Q. 1982, p.77-87.
- 2) "The Way Forward From Soweto", *AC* 3rd Q. 1977, p.21-50
- 3) Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 11 (Moscow 1965), p.423
- 4) Lenin, *Coll. Works*, Vol. 9 (Moscow 1965), p.113
- 5) Lenin, Vol. 11, p.213-4
- 6) *The road to South African Freedom* (brochure, London, nd), p.56
- 7) *ibid.*, p.57
- 8) *ibid.*, p.55
- 9) See *ibid.*, p.52
- 10) *AC* 3rd Q. 1968, p.4-10
- 11) The party in its programme had drawn attention to another error that is often made and that is that the ruling class consists of the whole white population. See *The road...*, p.29-30.
- 12) "The Freedom Charter. Revolutionary Programme of the African National Congress", *Sechaba* (special issue), July 1969, p.11-15
- 13) An article by Sol Dubula in *AC* 4th Q. 1981 similarly drew attention to the danger of vacillating middle strata to the liberation movement.
- 14) cf. Lenin, Vol. 11, p.118
- 15) This was made clear in a document of the ANC's National Executive Committee in 1973, "Forward to the Armed Seizure of Power", *Sechaba*, June 1973, pp.2-8
- 16) A meeting of the augmented CC in Nov. 1979 stated: "The system of exploitation and oppression in South Africa cannot be defeated without revolutionary violence involving the whole people." *AC* 1st Q 1980, p.36
- 17) *The Road...*, p.54. The point was made again in a CC statement in 1963. *AC*, April-June 1963, pp.3-18.
- 18) *From Protest to Challenge* Vol. 3 (eds. Karis and Carter) (Stanford 1977), pp.760-768
- 19) See article by Van Tao, "The Differences between the Vietnamese and Chinese Revolutions", *AC* 2nd Q. 1981, p.98-109
- 20) *Dawn*, April 1982, p.23-7
- 21) Lenin repeatedly stressed the importance of guerrilla operations in preparing the way for insurrection as well as in periods of lull between revolutionary upsurges. Lenin, Vol. 9, p.338-9, 341; Vol.10 (Moscow 1965), p.117-8, 114; Vol. 11, p.177
- 22) Freedom Charter (1955) as well as "The Freedom Charter. Revolutionary Programme of the African National Congress" of the ANC's Morogoro conference.
- 23) "The Way Forward From Soweto", *ibid.*
- 24) Lenin, Vol. 10, p.117; Vol. 11, p.122
- 25) Lenin, Vol. 25 (Moscow 1964), p.201
- 26) Lenin, Vol. 9, p.100
- 27) Lenin, Vol. 11, p.351
- 28) cf. Lenin, Vol 26, p.22

# **"THE BELLS TOLLING TODAY FOR GRENADA MAY TOLL TOMORROW FOR THE WHOLE WORLD"**

**Speech given by Commander in Chief Fidel Castro, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and president of the Councils of State and of Ministers, at the eulogy for the heroes killed in unequal combat against U.S. Imperialism in Grenada. Held in Havana on November 14, 1983.**

On October 15, 1976, a little over seven years ago, we gathered here, in this same place to deliver a funeral address for the 57 Cubans who were vilely murdered in the Barbados plane sabotage, carried out by men who had been trained by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency. Today we have come once again to bid farewell — this time to 24 Cubans who died in Grenada, another island not very far from Barbados, as a result of U.S. military actions.

Grenada was one of the smallest independent states in the world, both in territory and population. Even though Cuba is a small, underdeveloped country, it was able to help Grenada considerably, because our efforts — which were modest in quantity though high in quality — meant a lot for a country less than 400 square kilometers in size, with a population of just over 100,000.

For instance, the value of our contribution to Grenada in the form of materials, designs and labour in building the new airport came to \$60 million at international prices — over \$500 per inhabitant. It is as if Cuba — with a population of almost 10 million — received a project worth \$5000 million as a donation. In addition, there was the cooperation of our doctors, teachers and technicians in diverse specialties, plus an annual contribution of Cuban products worth about \$3 million. This meant an additional annual



contribution of \$40 per inhabitant. It is impossible for Cuba to render material assistance on that scale to countries with significantly large populations and territories, but we were able to offer great assistance to a country like tiny Grenada.

Many other small Caribbean nations, used to the gross economic and strategic interests of colonialism and imperialism, were amazed by Cuba's generous assistance to that fraternal people. They may have thought that Cuba's selfless action was extraordinary; in the midst of the U.S. government's dirty propaganda, some may even have found it difficult to understand.

Our people felt such deep friendship for Bishop and Grenada, and our respect for that country and its sovereignty was so irreproachable, that we never dared to express any opinions about what was being done there or how it was being done. In Grenada, we followed the same principle we apply to all revolutionary nations and movements: full respect for their policies, criteria and decisions; expressing our views on any matter only when asked to do so. Imperialism is incapable of understanding that the secret of our excellent relations with revolutionary countries and movements in the world lies precisely in this respect.

The U.S. government looked down on Grenada and hated Bishop. It wanted to destroy Grenada's process and obliterate its example. It had even prepared military plans for invading the island — as Bishop had charged nearly two years ago — but it lacked pretext.

Socio-economically, Grenada was actually advancing satisfactorily. The people had received many benefits, in spite of the hostile policy of the United States, and Grenada's Gross National Product was growing at a good rate in the midst of the world crisis. Bishop was not an extremist; rather, he was a true revolutionary — conscientious and honest. Far from disagreeing with his intelligent and realistic policy, we fully sympathized with it, since it was rigorously adapted to his country's specific conditions and possibilities. Grenada had become a true symbol of independence and progress in the Caribbean.

### **Internal Conflict**

No one could have foreseen the tragedy that was drawing near. Attention was focused on other parts of the world. Unfortunately, the Grenadian revolutionaries themselves unleashed the events that opened the door to imperialist aggression.

Hyenas emerged from the revolutionary ranks. Today no one can yet say whether those who used the dagger of division and internal confrontation did so *motu proprio* or were inspired and egged on by imperialism. It is something that could have been done by the CIA — and, if somebody else was responsible, the CIA could not have done it any better. The fact is that allegedly revolutionary arguments were used, invoking the purest principles of Marxism-Leninism and charging Bishop with practising a personality cult and drawing away from the Leninist norms and methods of leadership.

In our view, nothing could be more absurd than to attribute such tendencies to Bishop. It was impossible to imagine anyone more noble, modest and unselfish. He could never have been guilty of being authoritarian; if he had any defect, it was his excessive tolerance and trust.

Were those who conspired against him within the Grenadian Party, army and security, by any chance, a group of extremists drunk on political theory? Were they simply a group of ambitious, opportunistic individuals, or were they enemy agents who wanted to destroy the Grenadian Revolution? History alone will have the last word, but it would not be the first time that such things occurred in a revolutionary process.

In our view, Coard's group objectively destroyed the Revolution and opened the door to imperialist aggression. Whatever their intentions, the brutal assassination of Bishop and his most loyal closest comrades is a fact that can never be justified in that or any other revolution. As the October 20 statement by the Cuban Party and government put it, "No crime can be committed in the name of revolution and liberty."

In spite of his very close and affectionate links with our Party's leadership, Bishop never said anything about the internal dissensions that were developing. To the contrary, in his last conversation with us he was self-critical about his work regarding attention to the armed forces and the mass organizations. Nearly all of our Party and state leaders spent many friendly, fraternal hours with him on the evening of October 7, before his return trip to Grenada.

Coard's group never had such relations nor such intimacy and trust with us. Actually, we did not even know that group existed. It is to our Revolution's credit that, in spite of our profound indignation over Bishop's removal from office and arrest, we fully refrained from interfering in Grenada's internal affairs, even though our construction workers and all our other cooperation personnel in Grenada — who did not hesitate to confront the Yankee soldiers with the weapons Bishop himself had given them for their defence in case of an attack from abroad — could have been a decisive

factor in those internal events. Those weapons were never meant to be used in an internal conflict in Grenada and we would never have allowed them to be so used; we would never have been willing to use them to shed a single drop of Grenadian blood.

On October 12, Bishop was removed from office by the Central Committee, on which the conspirators had attained a majority. On the 13th, he was placed under house arrest. On the 19th, the people took to the streets and freed Bishop. Whiteman, Jacqueline Creft and other excellent revolutionary leaders were murdered.

As soon as the internal dissensions which came to light on October 12 were manifest the Yankee imperialists decided to invade.

The message sent by the leadership of the Cuban Party to Coard's group on October 15 has been made public: in it, we expressed our deep concern over both the internal and external consequences of the split and appealed to the common sense, serenity, wisdom and generosity of revolutionaries. This reference to generosity was an appeal not to use violence against Bishop and his followers.

This group of Coard's that seized power in Grenada expressed serious reservations regarding Cuba from the very beginning because of our well-known and unquestionable friendship with Bishop.

The national and international press have published our strong denunciation of the events of October 19, the day Bishop was murdered. Our relations with Austin's short-lived government, in which Coard was really in charge, were actually cold and tense, so that, at the time of the criminal Yankee aggression, there was no coordination whatsoever between the Grenadian army and the Cuban construction workers and other cooperation personnel. The basic points of the messages sent to our embassy in Grenada on October 12 through 25, the day on which the invasion took place, have been made public. These documents stand in history as irrefutable proof of our clean principled position regarding Grenada.

Imperialism, however, presented the events as the coming to power of a group of hard-line Communists, loyal allies of Cuba. Were they really Communists? Were they really hard-liners? Could they really be loyal allies of Cuba? Or were they rather conscious or unconscious tools of Yankee imperialism?

### **The Ultra-Left**

Look at the history of the revolutionary movement, and you will find more than one connection between imperialism and those who take positions that appear to be on the extreme left.



Aren't Pol Pot and Ieng Sary — the ones responsible for the genocide in Kampuchea — the most loyal allies Yankee imperialism has in Southeast Asia at present? In Cuba, ever since the Grenadian crisis began, we have called Coard's group — to give it a name — the "Pol Pot group."

Our relations with the new leaders of Grenada were to be subjected to profound analysis, as was set forth in the October 20 statement by the Party and government of Cuba. In it, we also stated that due to our basic regard for the Grenadian people, we would not rush to "take any steps regarding technical and economic cooperation which may jeopardize the basic services and vital economic interests of the people of Grenada." We could not accept the idea of leaving the Grenadians without doctors or leaving the airport, which was vital to the nation's economy, unfinished. Most certainly, our construction workers were to leave Grenada when that project was completed, and the weapons that Bishop had given them were to be returned to the government. It was even possible that our very bad relations with the new government would make it necessary for us to leave much earlier.

The thing that placed Cuba in a morally complex, difficult situation was the announcement that Yankee naval forces were en route to Grenada. Under those circumstances, we couldn't possibly leave the country. If the imperialists really intended to attack Grenada, it was our duty to stay there. To withdraw at that time would have been dishonourable and could even have triggered aggression in that country then and in Cuba later on. In addition, events unfolded with such incredible speed that if the evacuation had been planned for, there would not have been time to carry it out.

In Grenada however, the government was morally indefensible, and, since the Party, the government and the army had divorced themselves from the people, it was also impossible to defend the nation militarily, because a revolutionary war is only feasible and justifiable when united with the people. We could only fight, therefore, if we were directly attacked. There was no alternative.

It should nevertheless be noted that, despite these adverse circumstances, a number of Grenadian soldiers died in heroic combat against the invaders. (APPLAUSE)

The internal events, however, in no way justified Yankee intervention. Since when has the government of the United States become the arbiter of internal conflicts between revolutionaries in any given country? What right did Reagan have to rend his mantle over the death of Bishop, whom he so hated and opposed? What reason could there be for its brutal violation of the sovereignty of Grenada — a small independent nation that was a respected

and acknowledged member of the international community? It would be the same as if another country believed it had the right to intervene in the United States because of the repulsive assassination of Martin Luther King or so many other outrages, such as those that have been committed against the black Hispanic minorities in the United States, or to intervene because John Kennedy was murdered.

The same may be said of the argument that the lives of 1000 Americans were in danger. There are many times more U.S. citizens in dozens of other countries in the world. Does this, perchance, imply the right to intervene when internal conflicts arise in those countries? There are tens of thousands of Grenadians in the United States, England and Trinidad. Could tiny Grenada intervene if domestic policy problems arose that pose some threat to its compatriots in any of those countries? Putting aside the fallacy and falseness of such pretexts for invading Grenada, is this really an international norm that can be sustained?

A thousand lessons in Marxism could not teach us any better the dirty, perfidious and aggressive nature of imperialism than the attack unleashed against Grenada at dawn on October 25 and its later development.

In order to justify its invasion of Grenada and its subsequent actions, the U.S. government and its spokesmen told 19 lies; Reagan personally told the first 13.

1. Cuba had to do with the coup d'etat and the death of Bishop. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

2. The American students were in danger of being taken hostage. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

3. The main purpose of the invasion was to protect the lives of American citizens. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

4. The invasion was a multinational operation undertaken at the request of Mr. Scoon and the eastern Caribbean nations. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

5. Cuba was planning to invade and occupy Grenada. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

6. Grenada was being turned into an important Soviet-Cuban military base. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

7. The airport under construction was not civilian but military. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

8. The weapons in Grenada would be used to export subversion and terrorism. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")

9. The Cubans fired first. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
10. There were over 1000 Cubans in Grenada. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
11. Most of the Cubans were not construction workers but professional soldiers. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
12. The invading forces took care not to destroy civilian property or inflict civilian casualties. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
13. The U.S. troops would remain in Grenada for a week. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
14. Missile silos were being built in Grenada. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
15. The vessel Viet Nam Heroico was transporting special weapons. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
16. Cuba was warned of the invasion. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
17. Five hundred Cubans are fighting in the mountains of Grenada. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
18. Cuba has issued instructions for reprisals to be taken against U.S. citizens. (SHOUTS OF "THAT'S A LIE!")
19. The journalists were excluded for their own protection. (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "LIARS!" "FIDEL, FIDEL, GIVE 'EM HELL; LET'S MAKE 'EM RESPECT US WELL!")

None of these assertions were proved, none are true and all have been refuted by the facts. This cynical way of lying in order to justify invading a tiny country reminds us of the methods Adolf Hitler used during the years leading up to World War II.

The U.S. students and officials of the medical school located there acknowledged that they were given full guarantees for U.S. citizens and the necessary facilities for those who wanted to leave the country. Moreover, Cuba had informed the U.S. government on October 22 that no foreign citizens, including Cubans, had been disturbed, and it offered to cooperate in solving any difficulty that might arise, so that problems could be settled without violence or intervention in that country.

No U.S. citizen had been disturbed at all prior to the invasion, and if anything endangered them, it was the war unleashed by the United States. Cuba's instructions to its personnel not to interfere with any actions to evacuate U.S. citizens in the area of the runway under construction near the university contributed to protecting the U.S. citizens residing in that country. Reagan's reference to the possibility that Grenada might turn into another Iran — a reference calculated to appeal to the U.S. feelings wounded in that episode — is a demagogic, politicking, dishonest argument.



The assertion that the new airport was a military one — an old lie that the Reagan administration had dwelt on a lot — was categorically refuted by the English capitalist firm that supplied and installed the electrical and technical equipment for that airport. The British technicians of the Plessey company, which has made a name for itself internationally as a specialist in this field, worked alongside the Cuban construction workers, to whose civilian worker status they attest. Several countries of the European community that are members of the Atlantic alliance cooperated in one way or another with the airport. How can anyone imagine them helping Cuba to build a military airport in Grenada?

However, the idea that Grenada was being turned into a Soviet-Cuban base is refuted by the proved fact that there wasn't even one Soviet military adviser on the island.

### **Agreements for Co-operation**

The supposedly secret documents that fell into the hands of the United States and were published by the Yankee administration a few days after the invasion refer to the agreement between the governments of Cuba and Grenada by virtue of which our country was to send Grenada 27 military advisers, which could later be increased to 40 — figures that coincide with the ones Cuba published on the number of advisers, which was 22 on the day of the attack, to which were added a similar number of translators and service personnel from the mission. Nowhere in those documents that they have been crowing over is there something that has anything to do with the idea of military bases in Grenada. What they do show is that the weapons that the Soviet Union supplied to the government of Grenada for the army and the militia were subject to an article that prohibited their export to third countries, which refutes the idea that Grenada had been turned into an arsenal for supplying weapons to subversive, terrorist organizations, as the present administration likes to call all the revolutionary and national liberation movements. No weapons ever left Grenada for any other country, and, therefore, Reagan can never prove that any did.

The assertion that Cuba was about to invade and occupy Grenada is so unrealistic, absurd, crazy and alien to our principles and international policy that it cannot even be taken seriously. What has been proved is the absolutely scrupulous way in which we refrained from meddling in the internal affairs of that country, in spite of our deep affection for Bishop and our total rejection of Coard and his group's conspiracy and coup, which could serve only the interests of imperialism and its plans for destroying the Grenadian

Revolution. The messages containing precise, categorical instructions to our embassy in Grenada, which have been widely publicized by the government of Cuba, constitute irrefutable proof of the clear position of principles maintained by the leadership of our Party and state with regard to the internal events in Grenada.

The civilian status of the vast majority of the Cuban cooperation personnel in Grenada has been shown to the whole world by the hundreds of foreign journalists who saw them arriving in our country and who were able to interview each and every one of them. Nearly 50 percent of them were over 40 years old. Who could question their status as civilian cooperation personnel and workers with long years of experience on their jobs?

### **Cuba Told The Truth**

When the U.S. government spokesmen asserted that there were from 1,000 to 1,500 Cubans in Grenada at the time of the invasion and that hundreds of them were still fighting in the mountains, Cuba published the exact number of Cuban citizens who were in Grenada on the day of the invasion: 784, including diplomatic personnel with their children and other relatives. The agencies that sent them and the kind of work they did were also reported, as well as the instructions given them to fight in their work areas and camps if attacked, and the fact that it was impossible — according to the information we had — for hundreds to remain in the mountains. Later, the names and jobs of all cooperation workers were published, as well as the known or probable situation of each one. The facts have shown that the information provided by Cuba was absolutely true. There isn't a single fact in all that information that could be proven false.

The assertion that the Cubans initiated the acts of hostility is equally false and cynical. The irrefutable truth is that the Cubans were sleeping and their weapons were stored at the time of the air drop on the runway and around the camps. They had not been distributed. There weren't enough to go around, and they weren't distributed until the landing was already under way, and that is when the Cuban personnel went to the places assigned to them for that emergency. Even so, our personnel, now organized and armed, had time to see the U.S. paratroopers regrouping on the runway and the first planes landing. That was the invaders' weakest moment. If the Cubans had fired first, they would have killed or wounded dozens — perhaps hundreds — of U.S. soldiers in those early hours. (APPLAUSE) What is strictly historical and strictly true is that the fighting began when the U.S. troops advanced toward the Cubans in a belligerent way. It is also true that when a group of

unarmed cooperation personnel was captured, they were used as hostages and forced to lead the way in front of the U.S. soldiers.

### **No Warning**

The invasion of Grenada was a treacherous surprise attack, with no previous warning at all — just like Pearl Harbour, just like the Nazis. The note from the government of the United States to the government of Cuba on Tuesday, October 24, in an attempted response to our note of Saturday, October 22, was delivered at 8:30 in the morning, three hours after the landing had taken place and an hour and a half after the U.S. troops began attacking our compatriots in Grenada. Actually, on the afternoon of the 25th, the U.S. government sent the government of Cuba a deceitful note that led us to believe that the fighting would cease in a reasonable and honourable manner, thus avoiding greater bloodshed. Although we immediately responded to that note, accepting that possibility, what the U.S. government did was to land the 82nd Airborne Division at dawn on the 26th and attack with all its forces the Cuban position that was still resisting. Is this the way a serious government behaves? Is this the way to warn of an attack? Was this the way to avoid greater bloodshed?

Mr Scoon blatantly declared that he approved of the invasion but that he had not previously asked anyone to invade Grenada. A few days after the landing, Mr. Scoon — lodged in the Guam helicopter-carrier — signed a letter officially requesting the intervention. Reagan could not prove any of his false assertions.

When as a pretext for keeping the Viet Nam Heroico — which was in the port of St. George's on the day of the invasion — from being used as a means of transportation for evacuating the Cuban hostages from Grenada, it was alleged that it carried special weapons, its captain was immediately asked if by any chance he carried weapons on board, and the only thing that was determined was that it had just one fearful weapon — its name: Vietnam. (APPLAUSE)

The slanderous charge that Cuba had given instructions to carry out actions against U.S. citizens in other countries was given a worthy, official and public reply based on reality, proven by the history of the Revolution, that Cuba has always been opposed to acts of reprisal against innocent people.

The government of the United States has not condescended to offer the number of people arrested nor the figure of Grenadian losses, including civilian losses. A hospital for the mentally ill was bombed, killing dozens of patients.



And where is Mr. Reagan's promise that U.S. troops would withdraw in a week? President Reagan himself in his first address to the U.S. people, at 8:30 a.m. on the day of the invasion, in a speech prepared before the landing, stated that the situation was under control. That same day, his own spokesmen described the resistance the invading forces were facing. The military ride the Pentagon had planned would take four hours did not take into account the tenacious and heroic resistance of the Cuban cooperation personnel and the Grenadian soldiers. (APPLAUSE)

### **Twisting the Truth**

Who, then, has told the truth, and who has cynically lied about the events in Grenada? No foreign journalists — not even those from the United States — were allowed to see and report on the events on the spot. The pretext that this prohibition was a security measure for the journalists is both superficial and ridiculous. What they obviously wanted was to monopolize and manipulate the information so they could lie without any let or hindrance to world public opinion, including the people of the United States. This was the only way they could spread deliberate lies and falsehoods of all kinds — which would be difficult to clear up and refute after their initial impact and effect on the people of the United States. Even in this, the method used by the U.S. administration was fascist.

What is left now, objectively, of those 19 assertions? Where are the silos for strategic missiles that were being built in Grenada? But all those lies that the world did not believe, told by the U.S. president and his spokesmen, made a tremendous impact on U.S. public opinion.

Moreover, the invasion of Grenada was presented to the U.S. people as a great victory for Reagan's foreign policy against the socialist camp and the revolutionary movement. It was linked to the tragic death of 240 U.S. soldiers in Beirut, to the memory of the hostages in Iran, to the humiliating defeat in Vietnam and to the resurgence of the United States as an influential power on the world scene. A dirty, dishonest appeal was made to U.S. patriotism, to national pride, to the grandeur and glory of the nation. This was how they got a majority of the U.S. people — it is said that it was 65 percent at first and then 71 percent — to support the monstrous crime of invading a sovereign country without any justification, the reprehensible method of launching a surprise attack, the press censorship and all the other similar procedures the U.S. government used for invading and justifying its invasion of Grenada. Hitler acted the same way when he occupied Austria in 1938 and annexed Sudetenland, in Czechoslovakia, in the name of German pride, German

grandeur and glory and the happiness and security of German subjects. If a poll had been taken in Hitler Germany at that time, in the midst of the chauvinistic wave unleashed by the Nazis, around 80 or 90 percent of the people would have approved of those aggressions.

The deplorable, truly dangerous fact — not only for the peoples of the Caribbean, Central America and Latin America, but for all the peoples of the world — is that, when world opinion unanimously denounced the warmongering, aggressive, unjustifiable action that violated a people's sovereignty and all international norms and principles, most of the people of the United States — manipulated, disinformed and deceived — supported the monstrous crime committed by the government.

There is something even more disturbing: when this about-face was effected in U.S. public opinion, many U.S. politicians who initially had opposed these events ended up by condoning Reagan's actions, and the press — censored, humiliated and kept at a distance from the events — ended up moderating its complaints and criticisms.

Are these, perchance, the virtues of a society where the opinion and the political and informational institutions can be grossly manipulated by its rulers, as they were in German society in the time of fascism? Where is the glory, the grandeur and the victory in invading and defeating one of the tiniest countries in the world, of no economic or strategic significance? Where is the heroism in fighting a handful of workers and other civilian cooperation personnel whose heroic resistance — in spite of the surprise element; the shortage of ammunition; and their disadvantages in terms of terrain, arms and numbers — against the air, sea and land forces of the most powerful imperialist country in the world forced it to bring in the 82nd Airborne Division, when the last stronghold was being defended at dawn on October 26 by barely 50 fighters? (APPLAUSE) The United States did not achieve any victory at all — not political or military or moral. If anything, it was a Pyrrhic military victory and a profound moral defeat, as we pointed out on another occasion.

The imperialist government of the United States wanted to kill the symbol of the Grenadian Revolution, but the symbol was already dead. The Grenadian revolutionaries themselves destroyed it with their split and their colossal errors. We believe that, after the death of Bishop and his closest comrades, after the army fired on the people and after the Party and the government divorced themselves from the masses and isolated themselves from the world, the Grenadian revolutionary process could not survive.

In its efforts to destroy a symbol, the United States killed a corpse and brought the symbol back to life at the same time. (APPLAUSE) Was it for this

that it challenged international law and won the repudiation and condemnation of the world?

Does it feel such contempt for the rest of mankind? Is that contempt really so great that Mr. Reagan's appetite for breakfast on November 3 was not at all affected, as he declared before the press?

### **Threat to World Peace**

If unfortunately all this were true — and it seems to be — the invasion of Grenada should lead us to an awareness of the realities and dangers that threaten the world.

Mr. O'Neill, speaker of the House of Representatives, said that it was sinful that a man who was totally uninformed and ignorant about the international problems and who doesn't even read the documents was president of the United States. If we consider that the United States has powerful sophisticated means of conventional and nuclear warfare and that the president of that country can declare war without consulting anyone, it is not only sinful but truly dramatic and tragic for all mankind.

An air of triumph reigns in the Reagan administration. The echoes of the last shots in Grenada have barely died away and there is talk of intervening in El Salvador, Nicaragua and even Cuba.

In the Middle East and Southern Africa imperialism's acts of interference and military aggression against progressive countries and national liberation movements continue unabated.

In Europe, the first of the 572 Pershing and Cruise missiles are already being deployed, surrounding the USSR and other socialist countries with a deadly ring of nuclear weapons that can reach their territories in a matter of minutes.

Not just the small countries, but all mankind is threatened. The bells tolling today for Grenada may toll tomorrow for the whole world.

The most prestigious and experienced scientists and doctors assure us that man could not survive a global nuclear conflict. The destructive power of these stockpiled weapons is a million times greater than that of the unsophisticated bombs that wiped out the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in just a few seconds. This is what the Reagan administration's aggressive, warmongering policy can lead to.

Meanwhile, the arms race is already a reality in the midst of the worst economic crisis the world has witnessed since the '30s. And, with the problems of development of the vast majority of the peoples in the world still to be solved, who can feel confidence in a government that acts as



precipitately, rashly and cynically as the U.S. government did in Grenada? Reagan did not even bother to listen to the advice of a government as closely linked to him politically, ideologically and militarily as the British government. It is not strange that, in a poll taken just a few days ago, more than 90 percent of the British were categorically opposed to the United States' having the unilateral prerogative of using the Cruise missiles that are being deployed there.

In our hemisphere, just a year and a half ago, a NATO power used sophisticated war means to shed Argentine blood in the Malvinas. The Reagan administration supported that action. It did not even consider the Organization of American States or the so-called security pacts and agreements, but scornfully pushed them aside. Now, basing itself on the alleged request of a phantasmagoric Organization of Eastern Caribbean states, it has invaded Grenada and shed Caribbean blood and Cuban blood. Nicaragua paid a price of over forty thousand lives for freedom, and nearly a thousand more sons of that noble people have been killed in the attacks made by mercenary bands organized, trained and equipped by the U.S. government. In El Salvador, over 50,000 people have been murdered by a genocidal regime whose army is equipped trained and directed by the United States. In Guatemala, more than 100,000 have died at the hands of the repressive system installed by the CIA in 1954 when it overthrew the progressive Arbenz government. How many have died in Chile since imperialism staged the overthrow and assassination of Salvadore Allende? How many have died in Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay. Brazil and Bolivia in the last 15 years?

What a high price our people have paid in blood, sacrifice, poverty and mourning for imperialist domination and the unjust social system it has imposed on our nations!

### **Our Ideas Will Multiply**

Imperialism is bent on destroying symbols, because it knows the value of symbols, of examples and of ideas. It wanted to destroy them in Grenada and it wants to destroy them in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba; but symbols, examples and ideas cannot be destroyed. When their enemies think they have destroyed them, what they have actually done is made them multiply. (APPLAUSE) In trying to wipe out the first Christians, the Roman emperors spread Christianity throughout the world. Likewise, all attempts to destroy our ideas will only multiply them.

Grenada has already multiplied the Salvadoran, Nicaraguan and Cuban revolutionaries' patriotic conviction and fighting spirit. (APPLAUSE) It has been proved that the best U.S. troops can be fought and that they are not feared. (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS) The imperialists must not ignore the fact that they will encounter fierce resistance wherever they attack a revolutionary people. Let us hope that their Pyrrhic victory in Grenada and their air of triumph don't go to their heads, leading them to commit serious, irreversible errors.

They will not find in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Cuba the particular circumstances of revolutionaries divided among themselves and divorced from the people that they found in tiny Grenada. (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS)

In more than three years of heroic struggle, the Salvadoran revolutionaries have become experienced, fearsome and invincible fighters. There are thousands of them who know the land inch by inch, veterans of dozens of victorious combats who are accustomed to fighting and winning when the odds are one to ten against elite troops, trained, armed and advised by the United States. Their unity is more solid and indestructible than ever.

In Nicaragua, the imperialists would have to confront a deeply patriotic and revolutionary people that is united, organized, armed and ready to fight and that can never be subjugated. (APPLAUSE)

With regard to Cuba, if in Grenada, the imperialists had to bring in an elite division to fight against a handful of isolated men struggling in a small stronghold, lacking fortifications, a thousand miles from their homeland, how many divisions would they need against millions of combatants fighting on their own soil alongside their own people? (PROLONGED APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS)

Our country — as we have already said on other occasions — might be wiped off the face of the earth, but it will never be conquered and subjugated (PROLONGED APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS OF "COMMANDER IN CHIEF WE AWAIT YOUR ORDERS!")

In the present conditions of our continent, a U.S. war against a Latin American people would raise the morale of all the peoples of Latin America and turn their feelings against the aggressors. A bottomless abyss would be opened between peoples that, because they are in the same hemisphere, are called upon to live in peace, friendship and mutual respect, and cooperate with one another.

The experiences of Grenada will be examined in detail to extract the utmost benefit from them for use in case of another attack against a country where

there are Cuban cooperation personnel or on our own homeland. (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS)

The Cubans who were captured and virtually turned into hostages had an unforgettable experience of what a country occupied by Yankee invading troops is like. The physical and psychological treatment given the cooperation personnel who were taken prisoner was insulting and a cause for indignation, and promises of all kinds were made to each of them to try to get them to go to the United States. But they were not able to break their steel-like staunchness. Not a single one deserted his homeland. (APPLAUSE AND SHOUTS)

There was no manipulation of the news, nothing was hidden from the people, in our country. All reports concerning the invasion that were received directly from Grenada were transmitted to our population just as they arrived, even though the ones on October 26 turned out to be exaggerated. As a matter of principle, at no time were efforts made to play down the seriousness of the situation or to minimize the magnitude of the dangers facing our compatriots.

We are deeply grateful to the International Committee of the Red Cross (APPLAUSE) for its interest, dedication and efficient efforts to identify and evacuate the wounded, sick and other prisoners and the dead as quickly as possible. We are also grateful to the governments of Spain and Colombia for the immediate efforts they made in this regard. (APPLAUSE)

In bidding farewell to our beloved brothers who died heroically in combat, fulfilling with honour their patriotic and internationalist duties, and in expressing our deepest solidarity to their loved ones, we do not forget that there are Grenadian mothers and U.S. mothers who are crying for their sons who died in Grenada. (APPLAUSE) We send our condolences to the mothers and other relatives of the Grenadians who were killed and also to the mothers and other relatives of the U.S. soldiers who died — because they, who also suffer from the loss of close relatives, are not to blame for their government's warmongering, aggressive, irresponsible actions; they, too, are its victims. (APPLAUSE)

Every day, every hour, every minute — at work, at our study and combat positions — we will remember our comrades who died in Grenada. (APPLAUSE)

The men whom we will bury this afternoon fought for us and for the world. They may seem to be corpses. Reagan wants to make corpses of all our people, men, women, the elderly and the children; he wants to make a corpse out of all mankind. But the people shall struggle to preserve their



independence and their lives; they will struggle to prevent the world from becoming a huge cemetery; they will struggle and pay the price necessary for mankind to survive.

However, they are not corpses; they are symbols. They did not even die in the land where they were born. There, far away from Cuba, where they were contributing with the noble sweat of their internationalist work in a country poorer and smaller than ours, they were also capable of shedding their blood and offering their lives. But in that trench, they knew they were also defending their own people and their own homeland.

It is impossible to express the generosity of human beings and their willingness to make sacrifices in a more pure way. Their example will be multiplied, their ideas will be multiplied and they themselves will be multiplied in us. No power, no weapons, no forces can ever prevail over the patriotism, internationalism, feelings of human brotherhood and communist consciousness which they embody.

We shall be like them, in work and in combat! (APPLAUSE)

Patria o Muerte!

Venceremos! (OVATION)



# **SLAVE LABOUR ON A CISKEI FARM**

## **Why the workers are in Revolt**

**By Letsema**

One of the main planks for 'development of the homelands', according to the theoreticians of apartheid, is agriculture. Each of the bantustans, "independent" or otherwise, presents agriculture as a primary motor to "economic independence" as well as a means of securing support for their illegitimate and unpopular mini-regimes by installing a middle class farmer-entrepreneur entrenched in the cash economy. The strategy to increase productivity is invariably high capital — and technology — intensive. Ownership is frequently private, white and state; or private, black, white and state. Control is mostly exercised by white management. According to the Ciskei National Development Corporation Annual Report of 1981/1982, for example, only one of its 3 pineapple farms in the Peddie District has a black manager. The report states:

"As this manager is illiterate he needs assistance with administrative tasks, making it all the more impressive that he could rise to this level."

However far from generating development these schemes have served to deepen rural inequality, benefitting few and swelling the ranks of the poor, the landless and the unemployed. This is a fact recognised even by some in the corridors of newly-given power. Thus in 1980 a confidential Ciskei 'government' report stated:

“In the Ciskei we are too obsessed with spectacular capital intensive projects to bother about the masses. Will the day not dawn when the voters of the Ciskei rebel and say ‘What is there for us in agricultural development?’.”

In the Ciskei the answer is coming in many ways. During 1983 there was a strike at the Tyefu irrigation project. Livestock at the various projects has been injured. Serious theft is rife. Bitterness and resentment are mounting and are not confined to farm workers. Even those who are supposed to benefit from the scheme through land allocations are dissatisfied because they are treated like ‘employees’. They have no say over what is produced or the methods employed in production. Their income is fixed and profits go to the real owners of the schemes. They are tied to the land even when they are unable to make a living from it.

The focus here is on the Ciskei, but the problems and conditions highlighted are not peculiar to it; rather they are characteristic of relations in agriculture throughout South Africa. The following interview with Sisa (real name withheld), conducted in 1981 but here published for the first time, vividly reveals the backwardness and repression to which farm workers are daily subjected.

He was the first black manager to be employed on the Tsume citrus project owned by the Ciskei National Development Corporation. At that time it had not yet been incorporated into the Ciskei and the Ciskei had, as yet, not been forced into “independence”. The Tsume citrus project is a diversified farming enterprise producing tobacco, oranges, beef, dairy cattle, vegetables and pasturage, covering about 700 acres. It employed 400 full-time workers but at peak periods up to 1000 people worked on the farm. As a ‘deputy manager’ he was paid R250 a month. There were no fringe benefits. The manager was paid R1,800 a month plus fringe benefits.

Conditions in the Ciskei are substantially unaltered since that time:

**How did you become interested in agriculture?**

I became involved in agriculture partly because that’s where I grew up and had been initiated into it and partly because of my political outlook. My fellow students were interested in doing medicine or white collar jobs. I went to Fort Hare. Black consciousness was very rife and there was a lot of discussion. That is when I made a decision. If we say we fight for land I would like to know how to utilise the land. Hence I decided to study agriculture. In Mdantsane there were many ex-Robben Islanders and I happened to be in touch with some of them, especially the ones of the ANC. So when discussing with one of them, he showed me the importance of the course I had chosen.



It's a four-year course mainly put up by the SA government as a way of building an infrastructure for agriculture in the 'homelands'. My fellow students were mainly sent there by 'homeland governments', which meant that during the holidays they would do practical work. When they finished they would go and work in the bantustans. I finished in 1977. Field work started while I was a student.

I was interested in the Tsume Citrus Project because I knew it during my studies. We used to go and do practicals there. It is one of the farms near to the University.

**What were the conditions like on this large, industrial farm?**

Starting time for work was 6.00 and knocking-off time was 5 in the afternoon. Saturday was half day. So farm workers worked a five and a half day week. They were paid according to whether they were permanent, seasonal or piece-job workers. A piece-job worker is a worker who is paid according to the day and the amount of work he gets done. For instance, at weeding time, you just cut a piece of land and say you're supposed to work from here to there for a couple of hours, and you get paid on completion of the task.

Men and women were employed. I would say the ratio was two men to one woman permanent workers. Seasonal workers were almost all women. Mostly because it is set up in an area where there is a rural location, a concentration of people from the countryside. And it is almost always the case that the men are in the mines.

Full time workers were housed in anything from tin shacks to rondavels. All the houses were home-made, not built by the Ciskei Development Corporation. There was no electricity. Water was from taps outside.

**Where were the seasonal workers housed?**

Seasonal workers were staying in the surrounding villages, not on the farm. They were brought into work every day on the trucks. They would be fetched at 5am to start working at six. There were different loads made of different villages and there weren't many trucks to do the rounds. By six-o'clock starting time they were all collected. There were few men, mainly old women and children, a lot of children.

**What was the rate of pay?**

The highest paid worker there, a permanent worker, earned R20 a month. The 'casual' workers were paid a rand a day. Anyway that was what they

were supposed to get, the official pay. But they were not paid that. They were paid by a white manager. The office sends the money to the manager and before he pays the permanent workers he deducts "for mishandling a tractor" or whatever. He chooses how much to deduct. He deducts the money the worker owes in any form of debt. By the time the whole calculation has been done you find the worker getting R5. Some workers are not paid, even if the manager has the money.

**Can you tell us a little about the work done on the farm?**

I was employed mainly at the dairy. The dairy had 295 friesian cattle which were machine milked. The milkers were mainly women, because they believe that women are "more efficient" in milking and cattle care. On the whole the dairy employed 20 workers, both men and women. The men mainly were for tractor driving or feeding the cattle. So there were about 12 women and 8 men permanent workers in all.

**How many workers would you expect to need to milk the cows if they didn't have machines?**

You need a worker per five cows.

**So in labour terms they made a huge economy. Are the women paid the same as the men?**

They were paid less than the men. The women were employed mainly in the milking and the cleaning. Men were employed in feeding, the loading of cans and general maintenance work. We started milking at 4 in the morning and there would be a 9 hour break and we would start at half past two up until five in the afternoon. So it was about a six-hour job. The cleaning took two hours.

**So that's an eight hour day. Were the men up at the time of the first milking?**

All the (dairy) workers were up. They were supposed to bring in the cattle, clean out the pens and give fresh feed. The men were working longer hours. The women would finish cleaning at around ten when they would have their breakfast. They would then do washing if they didn't have to do anything in the dairy, until the afternoon.

**You worked on tobacco?**

I worked on tobacco, citrus and in the farming workshop.

**Is tobacco more labour intensive?**

Yes, considering that the dairy was a capital intensive unit, mechanised. But with tobacco you have to employ a lot of labour for the transplanting of seedlings and also for harvesting. Mainly women and children worked here. Some were permanent and many were seasonal.

**What were the differences between the conditions for tobacco and dairy workers?**

There were differences, in the sense that with the dairy workers, they had breaks between shifts and they were getting a ration of milk. Each day a litre per person. They had to wake up early in the early hours of the morning and sometimes go late home because of a breakdown in the machinery and all the problems that that brought ... But really tobacco workers, standing under the sun the whole day, kneeling or having to bend during the transporting and during the rainy season working in the rain picking the tobacco, covered in rashes and developing allergies from tobacco ... really. But all the jobs have their problems.

**What kind of medical treatment did they receive?**

Most of the workers would not go and show up those things because they would be taken to be complaining a lot. They just continued with their allergies. Only in extreme cases would a worker be taken to hospital. You don't hear much about what goes on on farms. The workers were deformed by their injuries — on their hands, on their feet, scratches all over the body, ear and eye infections — from the spraying especially, because the wind used to blow the pesticides towards the living areas, covering their houses, getting into the water.

**Who was employed on the farms?**

You find that a person is born or comes to work on the farm with his family. And then generations and generations are born there and the farmer doesn't expect any worker of any family not to work on the farm, unless he goes out to the mines. They all have a long history of working as farm workers. They are not labour tenants. The farmer wants as much cheap labour as possible.



**Would you say that the villages are very rich suppliers of cheap labour?**

They are, but the farmer is mainly interested in the workers from within, because the workers who are in the rural villages are exposed to influences which they call 'politics'. They are political as far as the farmer is concerned, so the farmer would always like to keep the workers from within. The more workers coming out of the families he has, the better for him. For instance, those workers from the CDC farm were not allowed to go to town, because they would meet outside influences and become so-called "cheeky". At month end they had to submit a list of what they wanted and a truck would be taken out to go and do all the shopping for them and bring it to the farm. Then deductions would be made from their salaries.

**What are the farm management's attitudes?**

There is an attitude of paternalism. The manager behaves like the father. He would do the beatings, the punishments and the charges. All these kinds of things. The more chains he ties around the workers the more the workers have to stay on the farm.

The farmers in South Africa are the ones who believe in *Kragdadigheid* and when they see a black man they see an animal. These men are armed.

**You spoke of beatings?**

Yes. For instance, the woman who was working for this particular manager who was on the tobacco and orange section, was staying next to my house. She used to come home beaten up by the manager's wife and she would come to me for money, because she wasn't paid. I know the daughter, one time during the holidays, went to help with the washing of the clothes and ironing. She was a child. She once took the comb and combed her hair. Unfortunately, the madam could see that a 'black man' had used the comb, so the child was beaten.

**Were the workers organised in any way?**

When I came, the CDC agreed that I would work as a link. I didn't want to work haphazardly and since I know that the farm managers have their own informers amongst the workers I asked them that the workers choose a committee with which I could work. A meeting was called and I suggested they draw up a list of their problems. There was a consciousness because they wanted to organise themselves into a committee to represent them. They tended to elect the older people. Resistance began to get organised when I

came. For trying to put across their grievances, management accused me of creating the problems, because before I came they had never had “trouble”.

**What were their grievances?**

One of the things they didn't like was that the deputy manager who was guarding them at work was carrying a gun, because it had happened a year back, before I came, one of the deputy managers (who was still working there), quarrelled with one of the workers. When the worker wanted to retaliate he drew his gun. The worker started to run away and he shot him. So they had that experience.

The other issue was the money. They felt underpaid and they objected to the deductions. They wanted to see their money and their pay slips. Then they could pay back the deductions as they wanted to.

Then there was housing. In the rainy season their houses used to drip with water, they used to melt away.

They also objected to working in the rainy season without any protection. The CNDC management was sending raincoats and gumboots to the units for the workers on rainy days. The farm managers would give them sacks to cover their heads and take these suits and gumboots to sell.

The other grievance was the beatings. For instance, during the orange season the people living around a farm would sneak in and steal oranges. If anybody was caught a fan belt was taken, their heads would be pushed into a drum and they would be beaten on the buttocks. Going into the orchards to pick green vegetables was also punished with beatings. Another thing, if you drive a tractor — if you drive any vehicle — something can go wrong, even if you check. The workers complained that the breakages were not due to recklessness on their part, as the farmer alleged. They were punished for things outside their control.

They complained about their children, because during the holidays their children were employed without being paid. Moreover, they were encouraged to keep on working rather than return to school. They also complained that some of their fellow workers were being used as bossboys to report to the managers about them. They wanted a committee to represent them.

They also complained about their medical treatment. There was an instance of a person who was really in pain at home. He broke a leg while driving a tractor which overturned. The farm manager in the unit said there was no car going to town, when every day there was a car going to town, and for that matter, if somebody was injured a car should be provided. This came to my attention two days after it had happened and I took him to hospital.

**Were there any forms of resistance that the workers adopted — not necessarily collectively, but individually?**

Of course yes, often. When you take it at an individual level their emotions are involved and they feel there is nothing else they can do, so the nearest thing to do is to break the machine that you're working with or bugger up the tractor you're driving.

**Was there a demand for land from the workers?**

No.

**What connection did they have with the villagers?**

That's a very interesting question, because what I found was that even the people who are in the rural villages consider the people on the farms to be on a lower level. There was not much contact. Agriculture has low status. For instance, people from the village would only come to the farms as pickers — 'casual' workers or seasonal workers. They looked down on farm workers. It was funny. Even in the sorting room the seasonal worker would say "Ah for that matter, I'm not a farm worker. I've just come for a short time."

That looking down on the farm people is something which is on the side of the farmers. It works in the favour of the farmers because it shuts the farm workers off from outside influences and ties them more to the farmers.

**Was there a difference in consciousness?**

The national consciousness of the farm workers was at that stage quite low. The farm situation is such that the workers are closed from what is happening outside — even what is going on 5km away in the villages. Political consciousness was mainly based at a personal level. They know that the white man is treating them badly and that they are living in bad conditions.

**And the villagers?**

They were in a very active and fertile area. There was resistance to the official party — the CNIP. The migrant workers would come back from the city and tell what they had seen. They were after land. They had been resettled, moved from their ancestral land. It was a real grievance. The migrant workers were looking for jobs.

**Finally, what would you say is the difference between the CNDC farm and the average white farm?**

There is absolutely no difference. The white farmers operated in the same way as I found the CNDC farm was operated. There are no differences on the bantustan farms.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## COMBINING MARXIST THEORY WITH AFRICAN REALITY

**In the Twilight of Revolution — The Political Theory of Amilcar Cabral**, by J. McCulloch (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1983. Price £6.50)

Jock McCulloch is an Australian specialist on African history. The book under review is an attempt to assess Amilcar Cabral's theories in the light of the Guinéan and African revolution.

The title itself perhaps summarises what he has to say about Cabral:

"In total, the effect of Cabral's political career was to help bring down the last of the great colonial empires in Africa, and in the realm of theory to dismantle the central shibboleths of African socialism. As such Cabral's legacy, like his bequest to the people of Guiné, does not represent so much a conclusion as a new beginning freed from the fears, prejudices and superstitions of the past." (p.138).

McCulloch assesses the major aspects of Cabral's theories: the primacy of political over military considerations — "our fighters are defined as armed activists"; the connection between imperialism and colonialism (especially Portuguese); ideology and culture; state and class; neo-colonialism and nationalism etc.

According to McCulloch:

"Cabral's intellectual legacy comes to us in a series of fragments. This ephemeral quality is due to two causes: the writings were peripheral or, more correctly, preparatory to the struggle, and they were never written for the purpose of intellectual or abstract enquiry. Therefore they take the form of short articles, scattered essays, speeches and memoranda." (p.130)

There are serious problem facing theory in Africa:

"The major problem facing socialism in Africa has not been due to the typical nature of the social structures colonial rule left in its wake but, rather, to the complete absence of particular classes." (p.75)

Such factors as ethnicity, common land ownership and the absence of an industrial base make a class analysis of African society different and difficult. There are also such problems as the dependence of the working class on the petty bourgeois leadership and at times the inability of these forces to distinguish between formal and genuine independence.

The author says "in Cabral's work there is no obvious nostalgia for pre-capitalist communalism and no suggestion of that antagonism to urban life which is unfortunately typical of African socialism" (p.64) but he portrays Cabral's theories as a variant of African socialism.

There are other contradictions in the book: "Cabral's work is in accord with the best of Marxist tradition;" "Cabral's writings have a certain fidelity to the Marxist tradition" (p.135) and yet McCulloch can still say:

"It is quite easy to trace out the exact points at which Cabral consciously rejected a Marxist approach." (p.134)

This attempt to portray Cabral as accepting and at the same time rejecting Marxism conceals what is basically the difficult and contradictory process of combining Marxism-Leninism with African reality; a problem caused by the distorted and deformed nature of African society, the low level of Marxist-Leninist understanding on the continent, the pressure of international imperialism on the liberation movements and the pessimism that at times emerges in some circles within the national liberation movements. Cabral more than anybody else attempted to apply Marxism-Leninism to Guinéan conditions where there was no working class to speak of, no national bourgeoisie, but a peasantry and petty bourgeoisie.

Cabral seems to have understood the dilemma of the petty bourgeoisie, as McCulloch says in different words:

"It is an irony consistent with the history of African socialism that the reason why Cabral could so easily identify the fears and aspirations of the indigenous middle class was because its fears and aspirations were once his own." (p.89).

McCulloch sees "African socialism" — by which he means "socialist theories" emanating from Africa — as an aspect of "Third World Socialism" though he does admit that:

"The great strength of the writings of Cabral, Neto, Mondlane and Machel is that these men were more able to distinguish class forces from racial and ethnic movements than their counterparts in neighbouring colonies." (p.82)

He counterposes "Third World socialists" to "European socialists" and discovers that the shortcomings in Marxism as applied to Africa emanate from the fact that "neither Marx nor Engels had very much of significance to say about the backward countries of Asia and Africa" (p.110). He sees the petty bourgeoisie as a class.

The significance of dealing with a figure like Cabral is that it helps to assess the role of personality in history — an important field of study in the Afro-Asian world. It also helps to answer such questions as how can a country with a relatively weak working class and no national bourgeoisie embark on a revolutionary transformation of society towards socialism? What are the prerequisites for national unity?

The questions are important for countries like Ethiopia which are on the verge of launching a revolutionary party.

The experience of Guiné does not by any means suggest that Marxism is failing in Africa — all it means is that there are problems and these need a fresh look. Cabral did just that. He was one of the most original African thinkers and contributed to Marxist thinking on African problems. His contribution was fresh and stimulating. As the Guinéan revolution developed, so did Amilcar Cabral.

The book under review does suggest this, but it falls far too short of expectations.

Nyawuza

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## **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOBODY**

**Life and Times of Michael K**, by J. M. Coetzee. (Secker and Warburg, London, 1983. £7.95)

Coetzee won the prestigious Booker Prize with this novel, but it is hard to imagine why. Michael K is a singularly uninteresting fellow. Disfigured from birth with a harelip and with a mind which “was not quick”, Michael K is brought up in an institution which he leaves at the age of 15 to take up employment as a gardener in the service of the Cape Town City Council.

Although Coetzee does not use racial categories or definitions, one infers from the context that Michael K is either Coloured or African, continuously the victim of overt discrimination and rejection by those in authority. Because of his face he does not have women friends. his life is lonely and drab.

As lonely and drab is the life of his mother, who works as a domestic servant. She falls ill and loses her job. Feeling her life may be nearing its end, she suggests that Michael take her to the farm in the district of Prince Albert



where she had been born. He throws up his job and escorts her on her last journey.

They travel on foot. The country is racked with civil strife and the roads are patrolled by the military. Wheeled traffic is only possible in convoy. There are frequent roadblocks and demands for passes and permits. The old lady dies and is cremated. Michael K continues his journey carrying his mother's ashes in a plastic bag in a cardboard box.

Michael K's mother had been his only real contact with the human race outside of police, soldiers, clerks and officials. Now that she is dead, Michael K seeks refuge in the bush and lives alone, scratching a bare living from the soil.

"I could live here forever, he thought, or till I die. Nothing would happen, every day would be the same as the day before, there would be nothing to say . . . Sometimes, as he walked, he did not know whether he was awake or asleep. He could understand that people should have retreated here and fenced themselves in with miles and miles of silence".

Michael K has no resentment, no anger, no ambition and no hope; he merely exists and endures, without emotion of any kind. Round about him guerrillas are fighting against authority, but he is not involved, though his silence is invaded by both sides. He is imprisoned, hospitalised, refuses to eat — not out of protest but out of apathy — grows thinner and thinner until he is little more than a skeleton. For some unknown reason a doctor takes an interest in him and tries to persuade him to eat and survive, but Michael K does not respond.

Eventually Michael K returns to Cape Town and, falling in with a group of dossers, has some extraordinary encounters of a sexual kind which one would have thought beyond his capacity as a walking skeleton. This too he endures without emotion. At the end of the book, lying like "a mole or an earthworm on a cement floor", he thinks to himself:

"At least I have not been clever . . . I was mute and stupid in the beginning, I will be mute and stupid in the end . . . If there was one thing I discovered out in the country, it was that there is time for everything".

And for nothing. Frankly, Michael K is a bore and one finds it hard to sustain interest in his non-activities. He is too negative to comment on or even interpret what is going on around him.

And because the reader cannot identify with him either as hero or anti-hero, one feels neither pity nor terror at this fate, only indifference. Possibly Coetzee intended his novel to show that the human spirit can survive physical and mental disability, the indignities of apartheid, the cruelty of oppression, the stress of civil conflict and war. But the absence of any meaningful

relationship between Michael K and anybody else, including his mother, the absence of love or hate, resistance or acceptance, means that in fact we are dealing not with a human spirit but an amoeba, from whose life we can draw neither example nor warning because it is too far removed from the norm, unnatural, almost inhuman. Certainly those interested in understanding or transforming South African society can learn little from the life and times of Michael K. Nor does this novel provide the reader with entertainment; not even Coetzee's undoubted writing skill can turn a sow's ear into a silk purse.

Z.N.

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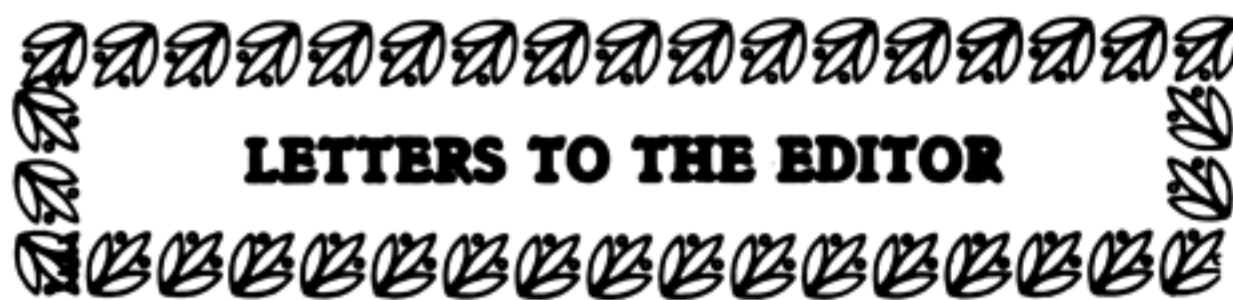
## **KARL MARX ON HIS OWN WORK**

"And now as to myself, no credit is due to me for discovering the existence of classes in modern society or the struggle between them. Long before me bourgeois historians had described the historical development of this class struggle and bourgeois economists the economic anatomy of the classes. What I did was to prove:

1. That the existence of classes is only bound up with particular historical phases in the development of production.
2. That the class struggle necessarily leads to the dictatorship of the proletariat.
3. That this dictatorship itself only constitutes the transition to the abolition of all classes and to a classless society."

*Marx to J. Weydemeyer in New York, March 5, 1852.*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

From a comrade in Botswana

Dear Editor,

The ANC and its allies lay a rightful claim to being democratic organisations within which there is free and open debate. However, one very important issue, that of the emancipation of women has largely been neglected. This is probably for two reasons, Firstly the fear of creating unnecessary divisions at such a crucial time in our history and secondly the fear of falling into the traps of bourgeois feminism. But it is necessary to have discussion on women and in doing this we should avoid both these dangers.

The emancipation of women will *not* automatically come about with the creation of a democratic people's state unless the problem of women's emancipation is tackled now during the period of struggle for power. But in saying this it is firmly believed that race and class oppression in South Africa is of primary importance — it is more important for example to do away with influx control and pass laws as this in itself will make fundamental differences to the lives of women. The problems of creating the foundations for sexual equality should therefore never be treated in a divisive manner and should never detract from our most important task, namely the seizing of power and the creation of a national democratic state.

#### Threefold Oppression

The majority of women in South Africa suffer a threefold oppression — as blacks, as workers and as women.

As blacks they are subjected to influx control, to the Bantustan policy, to Group Areas and the need to carry passes. As workers they are paid low wages, they do not have adequate unemployment benefits and insurance,



they are subjected to victimisation and dismissal without any adequate redress. As blacks and as workers they suffer similar disabilities as black men and male workers. But in both instances they experience this in ways different from men.

For example, the influx laws and the Bantustan policy ensure that the majority of women are sent to the homelands or live illegally in town. Of course this also happens to men, but there are more job opportunities for men, thus more women than men are left in the homelands totally dependent on their men to survive. A further example is that women with rights to live in urban areas lose lawful access to a house as soon as they are manless, i.e. become widowed or divorced. As workers women are found mainly as domestic and farm labourers. In both cases an important feature of the working conditions is that these workers are isolated from each other and are consequently deprived of the socialising aspects of work. Women working under these conditions do not share their exploitation and oppressions with other workers and thus do not learn to struggle against their hardships collectively.

The oppression of women as women takes the form mainly, but by no means exclusively, of housework and child rearing. In all South African cultures and traditions the burden of housework and child rearing is the sole responsibility of wives and daughters. Those women who do live with their families often have to carry this burden over and above their full day's labour as workers. The fact that the majority of women either live in the homelands, or work under conditions (as domestic and farm workers) where they are isolated from other workers, plus the fact that all women carry the burden of housework, means that women experience their oppression as blacks, as workers and as women as isolated individuals. This, coupled with the fact that housework does not leave women much time to be active in trade unions, community organisations and other political organisations, means that women are not to be found as active members of organisations or as leaders in factories, in the community etc. There are of course exceptions such as certain trade unions where the majority of workers are women and organisations specifically for women.

Women's isolation at home and in the workplace and their lack of experience in organisations causes and reinforces women's perceptions of themselves and others' perceptions of them expressed in beliefs such as women's inferiority to men, that a woman's most important responsibility in life is as wife and mother, that politics is not for women etc etc.

## **Training For Leadership**

In the national democratic struggle it is necessary to involve as many different groups and individuals from amongst the ranks of the oppressed as possible. This is a necessity to ensure victory sooner rather than later and to ensure that it is not a hollow victory won by a small group of people in their own interests. Women make up more than half of the oppressed in South Africa. Our major task is the seizing of power and the creation of a democratic people's republic. However, if there is no sexual equality within the ANC and the mass organisations in South Africa, the contribution (qualitatively and quantitatively) that more than half of the oppressed and exploited can make is limited. This in reality means that our revolution is retarded and the quality of the revolution is drastically affected. We simply cannot afford to leave out or treat as inferior more than half of our future potential builders of a new democratic South Africa.

Participation in the struggle is of course also an educative experience during which time activists develop a greater understanding of their enemy, his tactics etc and also develop their own collective experience and self-confidence as future rulers. In general women have been excluded from activities that give political and organisational skills needed in the struggle. Thus there is a noticeable lack of women in leadership positions. This cannot be changed by decree. It has to be accepted as a fact and conscious efforts have to be made to give women the skills to develop as leaders. Greater numbers of women have to be drawn into the liberation struggle, away from the isolation of home and workplace and greater numbers of women have to be given the organisational and political skills needed in the struggle.

The history of other struggles has shown us that unless the participation of women as equal political and military partners is coupled with open discussion and education of cadres on the emancipation of women and unless the traditional role of women as home-makers is challenged and changed, the equality that women attain during the struggle can be lost once power has been seized. Laws may be changed, but in reality women are expected to return to the kitchen.

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# THE STRUGGLE FOR NATIONAL LIBERATION IS A STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

A reply By Christos Theodoropoulos

Dear Editor,

One can but agree with "Mandla's" implication that the consummation of the national liberation struggle will free the whole South African people from imperialist domination and fascist rule.<sup>1</sup> The future people's state, based on the alliance of the working class with the peasantry, will eliminate all *national* oppression (of the African by the settler colonialist state) and *class* exploitation (of the working class by the capitalist owners of the means of production). However, while such a people's state may simultaneously provide a solution to both the national and the social questions confronting the country, it may not, of itself, correct a grave political and historical injustice which has been, and is being perpetrated against the African people of South Africa. While recognising the interrelationship of the national and the social for the future development of the struggle, we should not relent in our efforts to set the historical record straight.

The usurpation and plundering of South Africa by a group of settler colonialists was unilaterally 'legitimised' by Britain between 1910 (when a large measure of 'Independence' was granted to the Union of settlers following the recommendations of *their all-white* national convention of 1908) and 1931 (when Britain made the settler parliament 'sovereign'). This unilateral and discriminatory granting of 'independence' to settlers — in pursuance of a common metropolitan/settler conspiracy to "keep the native in his place" — violated the most fundamental and inalienable national rights of the indigenous people: the rights to be free and to freely determine their political and socio-economic development. The British act of recognising settler 'independence' was, therefore, *unlawful* and of no effect as far as the African people are concerned. This is borne out from their consistent resistance and national liberation struggle, particularly since the establishment of the ANC in 1912: *The essence of this struggle is to deny any sovereign rights to the settler state over the territory, the government and the people of South Africa.* It is not too difficult to understand why the then "civilized world" readily recognised this act of Anglo-settler conspiracy against the African by 'accepting' the settler state (the so-called Union of South Africa) as a member



of the international community. The major imperialist powers of the time even rewarded the settler state for its participation in the imperialist World War 1 for the re-division of colonies on the side of the Allies by allowing it to grab part of the "spoils of war": Namibia. The views of the racist settler leader Jan Smuts that the indigenous people are "so barbaric that no meaning of self-determination could possibly apply to them" fell on fertile soil and were reflected, in effect, in the Covenant of the League of Nations. The preamble to this Covenant was co-drafted by Smuts and the settler Union easily secured representation in the organisation independent from Britain. It will suffice to recall that the Covenant system, devised by the same imperialist powers which recognised the illegal settler state in South Africa, was described by V. Lenin as "the first case in world history of the legal approval of plunder, slavery, dependence, poverty and hunger in relation to 1,250 million people."<sup>2</sup>

At a time when the voice of the colonial victim was completely muffled, the settler state was thus able to secure imperialist recognition for its plunder in South Africa. Unfortunately, when the UN was established in 1945, this fraud was carried over undetected by even the few liberal members of the then 50-states strong organisation. The illegal usurper settler state became a founding member of the UN! South Africa undertook, in Article I of the Charter, to respect the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples which it so ruthlessly denied to the indigenous people of South Africa. The wolf 'undertook' to protect the sheep!

It is a tragedy that the decolonisation process, which has now more than tripled the original number of UN member-states and created the OAU in 1963, did not question, let alone reverse, the fraud committed against the colonised South African. All states today still recognise South Africa as a sovereign, independent country thereby unwittingly, to say the least, *conferring recognition on the settler state (the RSA) as a sovereign entity and denying the right of the African to statehood.*

Much of the confusion around the national question in South Africa today stems precisely from the acceptance of the myth of independence (of the African) for reality.

Let's cite but a few examples: The Lusaka Manifesto of 1969 states: "The Republic of South Africa is itself an Independent Sovereign state and a member of the United Nations." The O.A.U. also defines South Africa as an "independent sovereign state." This position still reflects the practice of all states regardless of whether or not they maintain diplomatic relations with the "Government" of "RSA". They question the racist policies of the government of RSA but not the illegal existence of RSA itself.

The question, therefore, arises: if colonialism has no right to exist, why should the replacement of British colonial rule by settler colonialism in South Africa be allowed to continue?

### Setting the Record Straight

The complexity of the South African situation and the myth of independence, practised for over seven decades now, are largely responsible for the innumerable — and conflicting — interpretations of the national question in South Africa. Even the Programme of the Communist Party and the strategy of the ANC are not immune from differing interpretations as is witnessed by the ongoing discussion of the national question in the pages of *The African Communist* and *Sechaba*.

The Party and ANC general positions (colonialism of a special type) are well-known:

“South Africa is not a colony but an independent state. Yet masses of our people enjoy neither independence nor freedom.”<sup>3</sup>

“South Africa ... is not a colony, yet it has, in regard to the overwhelming majority of its people, most of the features of the classical colonial structures.”<sup>4</sup>

The time has perhaps come to extend concepts already found in the above official documents to their logical conclusion and draw the necessary practical implications. Take for instance, the two-nation concept as it is correctly reflected in the *Programme*: “The African people of this country are moving inevitably and consciously towards the formation of a single, modern nation.”<sup>5</sup> Relate this position to the rich experience of the ANC:

“The international legal status (i.e. sovereignty — CT) enjoyed by the regime, which denies the indigenous people the basic political and human rights, is in itself an eloquent testimony of the dominance enjoyed by the imperialist powers at the time South Africa was granted recognition as an independent and sovereign state... The position of the ANC declares that the people of South Africa, like those of Namibia and Zimbabwe, are a colonised people.”<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, if there is a colonised nation in South Africa, isn't it correct to understand the Party 'colonialism of a special type' thesis as actually meaning the struggle to eradicate the *illegal settler colonialist state* which denies the national rights of the indigenous people to freedom and independence? Isn't it what the Freedom Charter principle “South Africa shall be a fully independent state” implies?

At a certain point in the development of the colonial system of imperialism, metropolitan settlers in colonial territories were able to reproduce the colonial system locally with little help from the centre. Their growing economic and financial might enabled them to demand successfully settler

independence — a development which transformed them into a colonising power *in their own name*. This ‘independence’, however, did not affect in any way the position of the indigenous people who remained a colonised people, just as they were before ‘independence’. In the words of the President of SWAPO Sam Nujoma:

What we are confronted with in South Africa is colonialism of a special type, i.e. settler colonialism. One of the characteristics of settler colonialism is that imperialist domination is no longer exercised by a metropolitan power, but by a white settler state internal to Southern Africa.”<sup>7</sup>

Settler colonialism, far from being qualitatively different from classical colonialism, obeys the same laws of motion as the colonial system of imperialism in general. A settler colonialist state will thus attempt to acquire for itself more colonies (e.g. South Africa — Namibia; Australia — Papua New Guinea; New Zealand — Western Samoa, etc.) and even to impose there another settler colonialist state (e.g. DTA-Namibia) in violation of the indigenous peoples’ fundamental national rights.

Setting the record straight in this sense would mean acceptance *inter alia* that:

1. Settler apartheid colonialism is a brand of colonialism. Just like metropolitan colonialism, it is illegal and a crime against humanity. All states have the duty to assist morally and materially the victims of settler colonialism in their just struggle for self-determination, freedom and independence.
2. All acts of the illegal settler colonialist state since 1910 are illegal and of no effect *vis-à-vis* the African people. Such acts include the setting up of a settler parliament, government and judiciary, police and army forces, all obnoxious and racist laws and regulations (passes, ‘influx control’, reservations, colour-bar, etc.), Bantustans, granting of ‘independence’ to Bantustans, enacting the ‘new constitutional dispensation’, etc.
3. All states and international organisations have a duty to derecognise the settler colonialist state (the RSA) as the sovereign political power in South Africa. Any transaction with RSA in respect of South Africa is unlawful, particularly transactions of imperialist monopolies. Such monopolies owe full compensation to the future people’s state.

The list is almost endless. It stems from the above understanding of the two-nation thesis which, far from being “an over-simplified conception”, may indeed help us understand better the unfolding processes in South Africa described by Mandla, somehow puzzlingly, as both “colonialist/neo-colonialist domination” and “imperialist/colonialist domination” at the



same time! “Mandla’s fear, however, that the above two-nation thesis might (a) alienate the whites, and (b) blur the role of world imperialism which subjects the whites, too, to monopoly capitalist domination and increasingly to fascist rule, is well-meant, but unwarranted.

As to (a) above, the redressing of an historical injustice and acknowledging an historical truth can only *strengthen* the determination of those whites who are willing to fight on the side of justice and social progress. Justice and truth have never alienated true revolutionaries, whatever the colour of their skin. South Africa cannot be an exception. The 1928 Comintern Resolution on this point is today as true as ever:

“The white toiling masses must realise that in South Africa they constitute national minorities, and it is their task to support and fight jointly with the native masses against the white bourgeoisie and the British imperialists. The argument against the slogan for a native republic on the grounds that it does not protect the whites is objectively nothing else than a cover for the unwillingness to accept the correct principle that South Africa belongs to the native population.”

It is only on this basis that the Freedom Charter principle ‘South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white’ can be implemented in a free South Africa. In the peculiar conditions of settler colonialism in South Africa, the shortest, or perhaps the only, way for the white worker to liberate himself from the clutches of capital is to reject his colonial privileges by joining the national liberation struggle of the African people. The national liberation of the African is thus the first condition of the white worker’s own social emancipation. For a people who oppresses other peoples cannot itself be free. The two-nation thesis has an objective basis, reflects the major contradiction of South Africa and points the way to its solution. To paraphrase Khumalo Migwe, it shows us how to create class brothers out of political enemies.<sup>8</sup>

As to (b) the achievement of the *national* objectives of the liberation movement (i.e. the destruction of the colonialist state machinery of oppression — the RSA — as the last instrument of the colonial system of imperialism in South Africa and the creation of a national-democratic state) is the logical prerequisite for the success of its *social* objectives (i.e. the abolition of monopoly capitalist domination, the exploitation of man by man and the victory of socialism). Thus, in South Africa, too, the correct solution of the national question on the basis of the two-nation thesis will greatly facilitate the struggle for socialism.

Of course, this doesn’t mean that national and social liberation are necessarily two moments different in time. On the contrary, the extensive proletarianisation of the colonised and the invaluable experiences of class struggle in South Africa have objectively enriched the national decolonization struggle

with social, anti-capitalist content. This means, one hopes, that the difficult and rugged road to national independence for the African will be co-terminous with the social emancipation of all working masses, black or white. It is the totality of national and social liberation that will make the colour of one's skin as irrelevant as the colour of one's daily dress.

## FOOTNOTES

1. "Mandla", "Two-Nation Theory and the Role of Imperialism", *A.C.* No 94 (1983) p.106.
2. Comintern also refused to be fooled by the granting of 'independence'. It said in 1928: "South Africa is a British Dominion of the colonial type... The Party must continue the fight against all anti-native laws with the general political slogan of an independent native South African republic." See *Fifty Fighting Years*, pp.111-13.
3. *The Road to South African Freedom*, 1962, p.27
4. *Strategy and Tactics of the ANC*, reprinted in *Sechaba*, July 1969.
5. *Programme*, p.33
6. *Sechaba*, 4th Quarter, 1977, p.28. See also Oliver Tambo's comments, *ibid.*, p.8
7. *Address at the 20th Convocation Ceremony of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria*, 18th December 1982.
8. *A.C.*, No. 94 (1983), p.59.



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1035 KHz, Medium wave; 9685 KHz, 31mb shortwave  
Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays at 8.15pm (S. A. time)  
Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays at 6.15am (S. A. time)

**Madagascar**

6135 KHz, 49mb shortwave. Monday — Saturday 7—9pm  
Sundays 7—8.30pm.

**Ethiopia**

9545 KHz, 31mb shortwave; 9.30 — 10.00pm daily.

**Lusaka**

9580 KHz, 31mb shortwave, Monday-Friday 7.00 — 7.45pm.  
Wednesday 9.30 — 10.00pm, Thursday 10.05—10.30pm.  
Friday 10.30—11.00pm, Saturday & Sunday 7—8pm,  
Sundays 8—8.45am, 25mb, 11880KHz

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